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**To:** [Exhibits HNR](#)  
**Subject:** H.B. 2747 opposition  
**Date:** Monday, February 18, 2019 2:10:43 PM  
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H. B. 2747 is an antiquated approach to fish and wildlife management. Back in the 80's fish and wildlife services catered to "clients". Usually those paying fees or having an immediate economic interest in wildlife. Now the trend is to include all stakeholders in decision making. HB 2747 moves Oregon in the wrong direction. 2747 empowers a few special interests at the detriment of other stakeholders and the elected Governor of the State of Oregon.

I oppose moving 2747 out of committee.

Attached is an article from Cornell University describing the trend toward empowering stakeholders in Fish and Wildlife management.

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# From Clients to Stakeholders: A Philosophical Shift for Fish and Wildlife Management

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# From Clients to Stakeholders: A Philosophical Shift for Fish and Wildlife Management

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**Abstract:** Fish and wildlife management in North America has been experiencing a fundamental philosophical shift among professional managers and policy makers about who are the beneficiaries of management. This has been reflected in broadening notions of who should be considered in decision making; not just traditional clients who pay for and receive services of managers, but all stakeholders in fish and wildlife management. The term "stakeholder" has emerged to represent any citizen potentially affected by or having a vested interest (a stake) in an issue, program, action or decision leading to an action. The stakeholder approach in management decision making recognizes a larger set of beneficiaries of management (including, in concept, future generations) than the traditional concepts of constituencies and clients, or customers, a term currently popular among fish and wildlife agencies. The stakeholder approach requires: (1) identification of important stakeholders, (2) flexibility in selection of methods for incorporating stakeholder input in decision making to account for specific contexts, (3) development of a professional management philosophy strong enough to resist powerful special interests when broader public interests are in the balance, (4) development of ways to weigh stakeholder views on issues in manage-

ment decision making, and (5) establishment of effective strategies for communication between managers and stakeholders and among stakeholders to encourage understanding and compromise.

**Key words:** stakeholder, management, decision making, constituents, interest groups, publics, clients, users.

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Fish and wildlife in North America belong to the people as shared resources. The management and decision-making rules that govern their use and sustainability are similar to those found in the management of any common property. Although patterns of consumption and management rules vary across cultures, regions, and resources, the pervasive problem for professionals responsible for managing "common" natural resources (Bromley, 1991, 1992; Hardin, 1968; McKean, 1982) is the same: recognizing the interests of numerous individuals and coordinating resource use by them to optimize value while simultaneously sustaining the resource. This problem is made more challenging in the context of managing fish and wildlife as a common property resource because of: (1) the diverse range of public interests, concerns and uses of fish and wildlife; (2) the increasing public expectation for citizen participation in management decision making; and (3) the broadening view among managers about who are the beneficiaries of fish and wildlife management. Increasingly, people who have interests in fish and wildlife but are not anglers, hunters, and trappers have communicated to policy makers and managers their desires to have their interests addressed. Representing a philosophical shift for many managers, they have sought to understand the fish and wildlife interests and concerns of such people and to consider these in management decision making.

Adoption of this new, broadened perspective about whose interests and concerns should be considered and who should have input in fish and wildlife management decisions is a vital step in keeping the profession in a viable, central role in conservation. Failure to recognize and consider the breadth of public interests in fish and wildlife can diminish management credibility and effectiveness. Despite the importance of this broader perspective, the transition has been subtle, slow, and resisted by some fish and wildlife professionals.

This paper shares our perception of this broader view of the beneficiaries of fish and wildlife management, and argues the importance to the profession of adopting it. We begin with a review of the evolution of thinking vis-a-vis beneficiaries of fish and wildlife management over the last few decades. We then discuss the stakeholder approach to management, and note some challenges for the profession as it widely adopts this new approach.



## **Stakeholder: A New and Critical Concept for Fish and Wildlife Management**

We encourage the fish and wildlife management profession to adopt and use the term "stakeholders" to refer to the beneficiaries of fish and wildlife management. The concept of stakeholder originated in the field of program evaluation, where it was used in the early 1970s (Bryk, 1983) to represent someone with a vested interest (a stake) in an issue or program (Gold, 1983). Included as stakeholders are all those who may be affected by a program, as well as those who make decisions about how the program is managed (Weiss, 1983). Environmental dispute resolution practitioners and theorists embraced the concept of including all stakeholders in dispute resolution efforts (Crowfoot & Wondolleck, 1990; Susskind & Cruikshank, 1987). Definition of the term "stakeholder" related to environmental disputes varies, but typically includes individuals and groups who have: (1) legal standing, (2) great political influence, (3) power to block implementation of a decision, or (4) sufficient moral claims (Susskind & Cruikshank, 1987).

The term stakeholder is already being used in the fish and wildlife management literature (e.g., Decker & Krueger, 1993, p. 55), but has not been well defined nor consistently applied. We propose that stakeholders in fish and wildlife management be defined simply as those individuals and groups who may be affected by or can affect fish and wildlife management decisions and programs. Applying this definition liberally, people with many kinds and degrees of stakes may be stakeholders in a management decision, which can be a cumbersome notion to operationalize. Realistically, fish and wildlife managers must use judgment about which stakes and stakeholders to emphasize in decision-making processes. The discussion provided here is intended to help professionals reflect on that responsibility as they engage in this new way of doing business.

## **Clients and Constituents: Original Foci of Fish and Wildlife Management**

Prior to about 1970, the people of primary concern to the fish and wildlife management profession were anglers, hunters, and trappers. These resource users fit the traditional definition of a "constituency," a group of people (constituents) who authorize or support the efforts of others (professionals) to act on their behalf. Those professionals, the fish and wildlife managers, attended to the user groups' interests through their decisions and actions. The conventional vocabulary of the day also referred to anglers, hunters, and trappers as "clients;" people who pay (e.g., through license fees or earmarked taxation) for professional or expert services.

The terms "constituents" and "clients" reflected a special relationship between the professional fish and wildlife manager and the recognized direct beneficiaries of their work. The professional was the expert, paid to make decisions and carry out actions for the benefit of the client. In this

relationship, the professional typically was assumed to possess superior knowledge about all aspects of the management process, including knowing what the "right" management goals and objectives were as well as the best ways to achieve them. Because the professional manager had few constituencies to serve, an accurate understanding of their wants and needs was easy to maintain. Thus, most decisions could be made about management objectives without systematic studies of users or comprehensive citizen participation processes.

The client-manager system functioned well for many years because it embraced a mutually shared, narrow set of values regarding fish and wildlife. This close-knit and functional relationship was the working model in most states until the early 1970s when some managers began to consider other groups and vested interests, especially those focused on wildlife. Increasingly, managers found that the concept "constituent" did not work because growing numbers of people interested in resource management were not supporters of the *status quo* (Decker & Krueger, 1993). The concept of "client," someone who receives a service for a fee, was obsolete because not all those interested in management paid for it, nor did all those who paid for management receive a service (Decker & Krueger, 1993). The concept of "user" did not apply, because not all those interested in fish and wildlife management personally used the resource (Decker & Krueger, 1993). To the contrary, among those with growing, visible interest in fish and wildlife management were landowners who posted land against hunting and fishing (Brown & Thompson, 1976) and farmers who expressed their displeasure about crop damage from wildlife (Brown & Decker, 1979; Brown, Decker, & Dawson, 1978). In addition, growing numbers of nonconsumers sought to have fish and wildlife resources protected for their own recreational, environmental, ecological, or humane/animal rights interests. Landowners, farmers, and people with these other interests, however, were for the most part not regarded as potential beneficiaries of fish and wildlife management. Rather, their problems and concerns typically were viewed as impediments to be overcome to achieve management objectives for the "real" clients—anglers, hunters, and trappers.

### **New Interest Groups and Publics: Change During the 1970s and '80s**

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, growing public interest in the environment, punctuated by Earth Day and evidenced in such legislation as the Multiple Use-Sustained Yield Act, National Environmental Policy Act, and the Endangered Species Act, markedly influenced the fish and wildlife profession. Managers began to realize that people other than their traditional clientele were expressing keen interest in all fish and wildlife (not just those consumed or causing nuisance). This period of heightened interest in environmental issues was accompanied by the creation of many local, state, and national environmental groups that vigorously sought



consideration in management and policy decisions. Their views were expressed in powerful ways, including state and federal legislation, agency requirements for citizen participation and, with increasing frequency, through the courts, all of which have had major impacts on policy.

The fish and wildlife management literature of the time began to carry many references to "interest groups" and "publics." These two terms helped focus managers' attention on the fact that groups of people other than traditional consumptive users had interests in wildlife and reason to be considered beneficiaries of management. National surveys sponsored every five years by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service confirmed that the number of nonconsumptive wildlife users was increasing. Early research in the human dimensions area documented the broad sets of beliefs and attitudes people held about wildlife in addition to valuing wildlife for recreational use (Kellert, 1980). Expressions of people's beliefs, attitudes and interests ranged from concern about problems wildlife cause for people (e.g., car collisions, Lyme disease) to advocacy for the existence of rare and endangered species (e.g., desert pupfish, piping plovers). Furthermore, the animal rights movement received considerable media exposure during the 1980s. These groups typically profess the view that animals should not be managed by people, that animals should not be purposefully harmed by humans, and therefore that rights of animals should supersede human desires for their use for purposes such as hunting, fishing and trapping. These ideas are far removed from the philosophical foundation of traditional fish and wildlife management.

Another trend emerged during the 1970s—many people sought a greater part in governmental decisions at all levels, local to national. The traditional model for management of wild animals was becoming cumbersome and unacceptable (Richmond, 1973). A new era of citizen participation in government was launched, and many people with interests in wildlife expressed a desire to participate in decision making. By the late 1980s, citizen participation became a common activity for some fish and wildlife agencies, and increased their credibility among key publics (Stout, Decker, & Knuth, 1992).

One outcome of the increase in citizen participation in decision making for fish and wildlife management was a reduction of managers' control over the decisions. Increased accountability to the public was unsettling for a profession that considered nearly all decision making for management as its prerogative alone. Managers were faced with the new problem of responding to a greater variety of interests and concerns expressed in the public forum while still meeting legislated natural resource management mandates of stewardship and retaining the authority to apply professional judgment when appropriate.

Complicating this further, a new type of fish and wildlife professional has graduated from our colleges and universities and has been employed by our management agencies since the mid-1970s. Like their predecessors, these aspiring new professionals are dedicated and well educated but do

not necessarily share the traditional values that, for example, place hunting as one of the highest priority uses of wildlife; nor do they uniformly regard hunters as the primary beneficiaries of management. Not every new fish and wildlife graduate hunts or fishes! Though these new professionals may support or be neutral toward such traditional uses, many are interested in managing fish and wildlife for a variety of values, sometimes different from the values that motivated their predecessors. The infusion of these different perspectives within the profession has contributed to the changing view of the range of beneficiaries of wildlife management.

### **The Stakeholder Approach: Considering All Beneficiaries of Management**

Since the late 1980s, many professional managers have become active in ensuring that a broader range of interests and concerns (i.e., stakes) in the management of fish and wildlife are considered in decision making. A variety of methods are employed routinely to gain input and frequently to involve the range of stakeholders in management decisions. In this new stakeholder approach, managers seek to include all people who may be affected by a management decision (whether or not they recognize it themselves), not just those who make their views known to managers. Representation by an organized group is not a requirement for having one's interests considered in a management decision. For example, managers recognize that deer cause millions of dollars of damage to motor vehicles and to homeowners' landscape plantings, yet such interests are seldom represented by special interest groups. Deer managers themselves, therefore, have increasingly sought to ensure that these stakeholders' concerns are given fair consideration in management decisions. In addition, fish and wildlife professionals, especially governmental agency employees, have special "trusteeship" responsibility for the future and therefore responsibility for ensuring that tomorrow's citizens (not just future anglers and hunters) are considered stakeholders in today's management decisions (i.e., need to consider opportunity costs or options for future generations, sometimes referred to as existence and bequest values [Bishop, 1987; Steinhoff, Walsh, Peterle, & Petulla, 1987]). Thus, the manager's responsibility in the stakeholder approach (i.e., ensuring that interests and concerns of all significant stakeholders are considered in management decisions) is substantially greater than in the client-manager or constituency-manager systems described earlier. The stakeholder approach is similar to the type of thinking that currently prevails in understanding how the concept of the commons actually works (e.g., Bromley, 1991, 1992; Hardin, 1968; Oakerson, 1992).

The broadening perspectives about the beneficiaries of management and about the interests and concerns that should be considered in management decisions reflect some important characteristics of the fish and wildlife profession that need to be reinforced. First, adoption of a



stakeholder approach indicates that fish and wildlife management has the capacity to be adaptive and dynamic in recognizing new needs and changing to improve effectiveness, reflecting a capacity to deal with diverse current and future needs. Second, apparently many people drawn to fish and wildlife management careers understand the difference between reacting to pressures from special interest groups to yield certain decisions, and responding to the full spectrum of current and future societal needs for management of fish and wildlife on a sustainable basis; these professionals try to understand and address broad societal values, rather than limit their focus only to interests that are consistent with their own personal desires and priorities.

The changes that have occurred during the last 25 years reflect a maturation process in the fish and wildlife management profession as it has responded to broader societal changes. During this period, the profession's perspective about who has a legitimate interest or stake in management has expanded. People with traditional interests have not been culled or ignored, but they now have to share the attention of fish and wildlife managers with other stakeholders. Tensions within the profession and between the profession and its traditional "clients" have arisen because of this evolution, but we believe the outcome will be management that serves a broader cross-section of society.

The future of fish and wildlife management depends on managers' responsiveness to the full spectrum of society's values without falling victim to the special interest politics of one or a few stakeholder groups. Identifying and considering the values of all significant stakeholders are essential steps in decision processes that will sustain public support. We do not, however, advocate adopting a populist approach, in which managers try in vain to implement every action desired by each stakeholder group (to attempt this would be chaotic given the contradictory goals of some groups, or even to follow the wishes of a majority could be inappropriate if it is ill-advised for biological reasons). In considering the interests of diverse stakeholders, farsighted and successful public resource managers should not abrogate their responsibility for stewardship and public trust and likewise should not become brokers (Nielsen, 1985), simply doling out resources to highly vocal or single-minded interests. Rather, they should work hard to identify the range of interests that exists pertaining to fish and wildlife management. Given these interests and biological information, managers need to create a vision for the future and develop long-range goals that keep them on track when special interest politics attempts to derail their efforts. (We argue later in this article that much of this "visioning" activity occurs because of an abrogation of responsibility of legislators in providing clear and precise legislation.)

Ultimately, due to the expanded notion of whose values ought to be considered in fish and wildlife management decisions, managers are faced with confronting ethical questions in decision making (Decker, Shanks, Nielsen, & Parsons, 1991). This responsibility is perhaps more evident

under the stakeholder approach to management than in previous client-centered approaches. Values such as fairness, justice, and long-term concern for the sustainability of resources are morally and professionally defensible in our society and should be used, along with legislated mandates, as guides in decision-making. In the stakeholder approach one responsibility of the manager is to remind stakeholders of the importance of these overarching issues, help identify the consequences of alternative management decisions vis-a-vis these ethical concerns, and rely on professional judgment when these fundamental values are being encroached. When doing so, however, managers must distinguish between what is scientifically defensible and what is morally or legally defensible (Decker, et al., 1992).

The stakeholder approach suggests that a partnership of professional managers and a diverse body of stakeholders work together to identify management goals and solutions to problems. Fish and wildlife professionals must help people, in an unbiased manner, recognize the full range of short- and long-term consequences of management actions being considered. Communication and trust between managers and stakeholders and among different groups of stakeholders will be critically important. In summary, managers must take responsibility for ensuring: (a) that decision-making processes take into consideration the breadth of relevant stakeholder needs and interests, even those not advocated by special-interest organizations, (b) that those needs and interests are given weight in decisions (Decker & Lipscomb, in review), and (c) that such decisions reflect the overall public interest.

### **Challenges of the Stakeholder Approach**

We realize that adopting the stakeholder approach in fish and wildlife management entails challenges that require further consideration. Here we can do little more than list some of them, and encourage debate and discussion throughout the profession.

One challenge is that more public interests must be brought to the decision-making process and weighed by fish and wildlife managers. This may mean refusing to cave in to the most powerful lobbies or resisting making seemingly "safe" decisions based solely on public opinion surveys (Decker, 1994). In fulfilling these responsibilities, fish and wildlife managers must develop a management philosophy that enables them, when necessary, to resist persistent pressure from particular stakeholders. Because political pressures can be so strong, managers should not be expected to do this on their own. The fundamental responsibility for framing basic guidelines for fish and wildlife management ought to rest with legislatures, where dialogue and debate can be fully public and open to all contenders. Given broad legislative mandates as a foundation, professional fish and wildlife managers can build the framework for effective management that involves stakeholder input processes that, ideally, are insulated from politics. The problem with this ideal, however,



was identified earlier—the short-term goals of many politically powerful interest groups have great influence on public officials, a situation that works against the stakeholder approach. Legislators often do not want to bear the political consequences that may be generated by framing clear and precise legislation, preferring instead to give wide latitude to agency personnel in carrying out a particular policy (Lowi, 1979, p. 301). In raising this issue, we are not advocating that legislators micromanage our fish and wildlife resources, but rather that they clearly define overall mandate and societal values that fish and wildlife managers should strive to fulfill.

A second challenge stems from the fact that judgments about which stakes and stakeholders to consider in a particular situation are not always clear. If interpreted too broadly, stakeholder becomes synonymous with “citizen” and thus becomes either useless or redundant. If interpreted too narrowly, the larger public rightly can object that it is simply a pretext for empowering particular special interest groups. What stakes and which stakeholders to include in management decisions needs to vary with the circumstances, regions of the country, and management problems that are present. It is unlikely that every possible stakeholder will have sufficient weight to be included in a management decision. This leads to a related problem, professionals’ use of the “responsibility for future generations” perspective to assume veto authority over stakeholder decisions. It is essential to avoid having expression of this perspective construed by participating stakeholders as contempt for them, as if they had no concern for future generations themselves.

Finally, we note that debates about fish and wildlife are likely to become even more controversial over the next few decades, which will make application of the stakeholder approach more difficult and more important. To take a specific case, a good deal of recent thinking about how we should treat animals challenges customary beliefs at a fundamental level. Traditional liberalism holds that it is wrong to restrict an individual’s freedom unless it can be shown that significant harm to other persons will likely result from not doing so. But animals are not persons and thus are not taken as morally considerable under this worldview. Today, however, some advocates of animal rights/welfare want to enlarge the umbrella of protection offered by the state. Peter Singer (1990, pp. 18-19), for instance, believes that animals should receive the same moral consideration as that given humans, claiming that “adult chimpanzees, dogs, pigs, and members of many other species far surpass the brain-damaged infant in their ability to relate to others, act independently, be self-aware, and any other capacity that could reasonably be said to give value to life.” He concludes that “there will surely be some nonhuman animals whose lives, by any standards, will be more valuable than the lives of some humans.” Depending on the extent to which this judgment is shared by citizens, it has potentially radical implications for fish and

wildlife management.

What the animal rights/welfare issue makes clear is that arguments for the moral considerability of animals typically rest on either religious beliefs or on secular metaphysical beliefs that function very much like traditional religious beliefs. Such beliefs typically are part of competing worldviews, which, among other things, means that communication and the achievement of agreement on fish and wildlife management policies is likely to be difficult in a stakeholder approach, as it will be in any other approach we can identify.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

Overall, the stakeholder approach is desirable in modern fish and wildlife management for at least three reasons. First, the approach considers the broad range of interests that exists now and is open to others that may be expressed in the future. Second, the inclusive nature of the approach can result in more segments of the public understanding and supporting management decisions. Third, fish and wildlife resources controlled and managed as common property ought to reflect the reasonable views of as many segments of the public as possible without greatly favoring any particular "client," "constituency," or "special interest" group. The keys to improving implementation will include: (1) expanding the manager's view of who is substantially affected by fish and wildlife management and therefore is a stakeholder in management decisions and actions, (2) identifying and understanding stakeholder views, (3) seeking compromise between competing demands (stakes) when appropriate (i.e., without risking the long term integrity or sustainability of fish and wildlife resources), and (4) improving communication between managers and stakeholders.

A broad range of stakeholder values ought to be considered in decision making for fish and wildlife management. However, as we noted earlier, no simple answer exists to the question of "How?" The advantages and disadvantages of various forums for public involvement to encourage exchange among stakeholders and between them and managers must still be assessed. Methodology for weighing the needs and interests of certain stakeholders compared to others needs further development. We do not have a specific, concrete definition of "the public interest" to guide managers; ideally legislative bodies have provided such guidance, but we know that is not typically the case. Defining appropriate solutions to fish and wildlife management issues must occur with the help of clear-thinking individuals perceptive of the needs and interests of others. With widespread adoption of the stakeholder approach will come the experience and evaluation needed to yield practical answers to these questions. It will be a learning process for the fish and wildlife management profession.

Evidence of the success that can be realized by fish and wildlife management agencies that take a stakeholder approach is starting to accumulate. For example, the decision-making process for determining



white-tailed deer population objectives in New York State has incorporated input from diverse stakeholders through an approach where a citizen task force is established for each deer management unit on a five-year cycle (Stout, Decker, & Knuth, 1992). Fisheries management also has had successes to reinforce application of the stakeholder approach, such as the public consultation activities associated with the international issue of lake trout restoration in Lake Ontario (Lange & Smith, in press).

We would have preferred to conclude with recommendations that were more specific and more immediately applicable "on the ground" for the manager. But to attempt to do so would require oversimplification and distortion of a very complex situation. We believe that to remain successful, fish and wildlife professionals of the 1990s and beyond will find the stakeholder approach useful, but they will have to modify and apply it to local and regional issues in imaginative ways. Management decisions were relatively simple when there were just a few well-defined client groups. But those days are gone, and the future outlook is not clear. Like explorers of old, fish and wildlife managers will face both the dangers and the thrills of navigating uncharted waters. To be successful, fish and wildlife professionals of the future will have to develop a performance record and seek a widely-recognized image of giving unprejudiced consideration to all significant stakeholder interests in management decisions. Just as management of other common property resources provides occasional basis for dispute, professional fish and wildlife managers will continue to struggle with how best to handle irreconcilable differences.

Not every fish and wildlife professional will agree with our perspective on the stakeholder approach, but we believe that it is an essential element of responsive, adaptive management. In our opinion the future of the profession will be inherited by those managers who adopt, refine and practice the evolving stakeholder approach for fish and wildlife management.

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