



## THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

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November 10, 2009

The Honorable Ken Salazar  
Attn: DOI Strategic Planning Coordinator  
Office of the Secretary, Planning and Performance Management  
United States Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, NW, Mail Stop 5258  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

### **Re: Request for Comments on the Strategic Plan Framework (74 Federal Register 46784)**

Dear Secretary Salazar,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Proposed Department of the Interior (DOI) Strategic Plan Framework for Fiscal Years 2010-2015. The Wildlife Society was founded in 1937 and is a non-profit scientific and educational association of over 8,000 professional wildlife biologists and managers, dedicated to excellence in wildlife stewardship through science and education. Our mission is to represent and serve wildlife professionals—the scientists, technicians, and practitioners actively working to study, manage, and conserve native and desired non-native wildlife and their habitats worldwide.

TWS values science as a necessary tool to understand the natural world and supports the use of science to develop rational and effective methods of wildlife and habitat management and conservation, and to inform policy decisions that may affect wildlife and wildlife habitats. Science is the bedrock upon which natural resources management must stand to responsibly manage and sustain this nation's limited resources, including fish and wildlife populations.

In the proposed framework, “science in support of decision making” is a second tier priority, within the mission areas of “protecting natural, cultural and heritage resources,” and “sustainably using energy, water, and natural resources.” Science is a cornerstone for appropriate policy and decision making, and should be a top tier, Interior-wide priority mission area.

We strongly encourage you to include a new DOI-wide Science mission area, which could include the following priorities:

- ***Science-based management of natural resources:*** Science must guide natural resource management and conservation decisions. Further, the information supporting these policies should be available to the public, and the process used to make the decision transparent. The public deserves to be fully informed about resource decisions and to understand the role science plays in the decision-making process. In particular, they need to understand the potential consequences associated with various resource management

decisions. Various bureaus within DOI, including USGS and the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), provide vital information required by natural resource managers and policy makers alike.

- ***Preparing for climate change:*** the Department of the Interior (DOI) manages vast natural resources and public lands for which climate change has enormous implications. As part of its responsibilities to conserve, protect, and enhance fish and wildlife species and habitats, the FWS manages numerous refuges, many in areas especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change. The forests and grasslands under the purview of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) face greater threats from pathogens, fire, insect pests, and invasive species as climate change accelerates. Climate change also complicates the mission of the National Park Service (NPS), to preserve “unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system.” Major new research initiatives and programs designed to facilitate the conservation and management of ecosystems and wildlife species in response to a changing climate will be necessary.
- ***Workforce development:*** A well-trained scientific and natural resources management workforce is required to conduct research and monitoring, educate visitors to public lands, and transform science into management policy. DOI must contribute to a national effort to recruit and train the next generation of scientists and natural resource professionals. By investing in the next generation of scientists, DOI will help prepare students for quality careers and will ensure that the nation has a skilled natural resource management workforce for coming decades. In addition to existing efforts, a DOI-wide science mission should help establish partnerships with other government agencies and non-governmental organizations, including professional and scientific societies, to make wise education and training investments.
- ***Expanding access to scientific collections:*** DOI is a caretaker for a significant share of our nation’s biological, geological, and cultural heritage assets. Our nation’s natural science collections are irreplaceable resources that enable us to understand the world in which we live. These specimen and data collections not only help us understand the biological and physical history of earth, they also are essential to our ability to understand how earth systems function today and how they may function in an ever changing world. The revised framework should include plans for DOI to inventory, protect, and enhance access to these scientific collections. Moreover, DOI should work with nongovernmental science collections managers and scholars to ensure that federal and nonfederal scientists can effectively and efficiently share resources and information to advance research, education, and stewardship.
- ***Science for the 21st century:*** To meet the Department’s new mission areas and goals, DOI must invest in a mix of fundamental and mission-driven research. Our most challenging environmental problems are too complex to be solved by a single discipline or researcher; solutions to these problems will require a blend of disciplinary and interdisciplinary research. DOI should work with other government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and universities to leverage expertise and resources to avoid

duplication of effort, and to ensure that DOI can access the natural, physical, and social science expertise required to address 21st century problems.

Thank you for considering the views of wildlife professionals. If we may be of further assistance on this or any other matter, please contact Laura Bies, Director of Government Affairs, at 301-897-9770 or [laura@wildlife.org](mailto:laura@wildlife.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Hutchins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Michael Hutchins, Ph.D.  
Executive Director/CEO