



AWMS POSITION STATEMENT Sustainable Commercial Use of Wildlife

Background

The Society believes that there is a place for the commercial, consumptive use of wildlife, and recognises that a potential for a conservation gain from the use is an important positive aspect. The Society notes that the commercial use of wildlife is in no way a novelty, with forestry and fishing being prime examples of established commercial use.

This Position Statement have been developed on the understanding that the majority of AWMS members are likely to support a biocentric (= 'conservation') ethic, rather than an anthropocentric or animal liberation ethic.

Definitions: Wildlife is used to encompass undomesticated native animals and uncultivated native plants.

Sustainability is taken to mean the capacity for long-term commercial use without reducing the species' geographic range, changing existing patterns of genetic variability, or radically altering community structure and function.

Based on the above, THE AUSTRALASIAN WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT SOCIETY:

RECOGNISES that the people of Australia and New Zealand place a high value on the conservation of native plants and animals and that decisions about wildlife use are always the consequence of an amalgam of facts and values;

Is CONCERNED that despite this interest, biodiversity continues to be lost, largely due to land-use priorities that favour exotic species at the expense of native ones;

AGREES that, in developing a policy in relation to any particular wildlife management issue, the Society must place particular emphasis upon the application of scientific information and methodology but, in doing so, should not ignore values, and should strive to find a consensus view reflecting the values held by a majority of its members;

SUPPORTS the concept of achieving habitat and species conservation goals through the sustainable use of wildlife, whether consumptive or non-consumptive, as spelled out in the resolution adopted at the December 1990 General Assembly of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), which recognised, *inter alia*, that '... ethical, wise and sustainable use of some wildlife can provide an alternative or supplementary means of productive land use, and can be consistent with and encourage conservation, where such use is in accordance with adequate safeguards...';

RECOGNISES the need to develop suitable guidelines to ensure that the commercial use of a particular species habitat is sustainable, within the social, economic, and ecological context

in which the use takes place, and to be sufficiently flexible to account for risk and uncertainty in all these variables;

ACCEPTS that landowners are more likely to expend resources conserving wildlife that is economically valuable to them, than wildlife with a neutral or negative economic value;

RECOGNISES that a threshold exists between sustainable and non-sustainable commercial use. The threshold is the ratio of the annual rate of increase to the annual discount rate. If the ratio is greater than 1.0 then sustainable commercial use is possible. If the ratio is less than 1.0, commercial use will most likely be non-sustainable;

Is AWARE that it is now technically and scientifically possible to sustain uses of wildlife for commercial purposes, without endangering species or their supporting ecosystems;

RECOGNISES that any species which has the capacity to support commercially profitable and ecologically sustainable harvests is a potential candidate for commercial activity;

ACKNOWLEDGES that the commercial use of wildlife provides special opportunities for the sustainable economic development of rural people, including indigenous people, especially in remote areas;

RECOGNISES that there are some species for which cultural considerations prohibit any consumptive use and there is a need to consider each case individually, on its merits, and further;

CONSIDERS that the sanction of a harvest or other use should take into account potential benefits to the conservation of the species' habitat and other species in its community.

ACCORDINGLY, AWMS RECOMMENDS THAT :

1. Commercial use be restricted to those species with a capacity to sustain a commercially viable use and conservation goals should be maximised. The goal should be the conservation of ecosystems rather than single species, and the maintenance of existing biodiversity, or its increase.
2. The public acceptability of specific commercial uses of wildlife species should be determined through a process of consultation.
3. Protocols for regulation, monitoring, assessment, and reporting should be incorporated into a management plan which is subject to periodic review every 5 years or less.
4. The management plan should be developed in consultation with relevant interest groups, be long-term, linked to land tenure and structured in such a way as to return profits to the local area and, wherever possible, should return benefits directly to the landholder.
5. The management plan should be adaptive, based upon firm scientific principles and the best available knowledge, and include ongoing monitoring, reporting, and research to ensure that the use is both economically, ecologically, and culturally sustainable.
6. There be guidelines in place and mechanisms available to enable a re-evaluation of the commercial use of wildlife if conservation objectives are compromised.
7. Governments need to ensure that the Departments responsible for wildlife management maintain involvement in regulation, monitoring, reporting and

assessment, and that stakeholders, particularly landowners, are involved in all aspects of management.

8. The market place should be allowed to operate as freely as possible within a clearly identified regulatory framework set by the relevant government agency to ensure that conservation goals are not compromised.
9. There be minimal waste in consumptive use. In the case of non-consumptive use, impacts on the exploited species and its habitat should be minimised.
10. There be appropriate standards to ensure humane practices in the use of animals.
11. Care be taken to avoid impact upon 'look-alike' species which may be taken mistakenly or deliberately.

This position statement reflects the content of cited papers and the opinions of the authors. While the views expressed in this position statement have been circulated for comment within the Society, they do not necessarily reflect the views of the AWMS committee or all AWMS members. AWMS makes no claim as to the accuracy of this document and any party using this information does so at their own risk.