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# UNIVERSITY-BASED COURSES IN HUMAN DIMENSIONS OF FISH & WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: A PRELIMINARY INVENTORY AND INVESTIGATION

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Human dimensions is one of the newest areas of emphasis in the evolving field of wildlife management (Manfredo, Vaske and Sikorowski, 1996). Human dimensions is a general term used to describe the application of the social sciences to natural resource-related problems and issues. Manfredo and others (1995) describe the human dimensions approach as consisting of two components. The first emphasizes acquisition of sound information that explains human thought and action regarding wildlife using the concepts and methods of social science. The second component involves determining how to use that information in wildlife decision making. Over the past five years, wildlife managers, policy makers and planners have been applying the human dimensions approach to management of wildlife resources. Likewise, many institutions of higher education have responded to the need for a human dimensions approach by offering courses that focus on this important topic. Unfortunately, no data are available on the number and/or focus of programs of curricula that offer course work in human dimensions of wildlife.

This paper prepared for presentation at the Second Biennial Conference in University Education in Natural Resources provides a summary of a study completed during the spring and summer of 1997 intended to address these information needs. The purpose of this research was to complete a preliminary inventory of Human Dimensions of Wildlife courses offered in the USA, to collect descriptive information on the institutions and faculty offering these courses, and compile information on the course (e.g., enrollment patterns, course requirements, course title, etc.), and develop a preliminary profile of the objectives and content of the courses identified.

A one-page mail questionnaire was distributed to 110 Universities in the United States. The Wildlife Society provided a list of 80 universities that offer undergraduate degrees in wildlife or fisheries, the Wildlife Society Membership Directory (members affiliated with a university or college who identified "human dimensions" as an interest area (20), the advisory board and associate editors of the Human Dimensions of Wildlife Journal who listed a university affiliation (10), and a general solicitation was provided over the human dimensions of wildlife list server. The letter that accompanied the survey stressed the importance of an accurate inventory of human dimensions courses and offered incentives for participating in the study (i.e., a copy of the study results, a compendium of syllabi, and the publication of a listing of universities offering human dimensions courses).

The survey resulted in the identification of twenty-six colleges or universities that offer a Human Dimensions of Wildlife course. A vast majority of the human dimensions course identified were offered in Colleges or Schools of Natural Resources. A majority of the courses were offered for the first time in the past five years and most are taught by persons with traditional degrees in Wildlife Biology, Natural Resources, or Zoology. Enrollment appears to be fairly stable and averages about 20-30 students. Most of the courses are offered at the junior or senior level. The objectives of the courses varied considerably but typically included exposing students in the natural sciences to the human context of wildlife management decisions. A majority of the courses covered topics related to the identification of key stakeholder groups, the policy making process and an overview of a public involvement techniques. Course topics typically did not include an overview of social science research methods or techniques for integrating the biological and social sciences.