



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

May 2, 2012

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The Wildlife Society Announces 2012 Leadership Institute Participants

Bethesda, MD – The Wildlife Society (TWS) today released the list of candidates who have been chosen to participate in the 2012 TWS Leadership Institute. All applicants are early-career wildlife professionals who were selected to participate in a variety of distance learning and hands-on projects, which will culminate in intensive mentoring activities and leadership workshops at the TWS Annual Conference in Portland, Oregon from October 13-18, 2012.

“It is well known in the profession that nearly 70 percent of our leaders are projected to retire in the next decade,” says Michael Hutchins, Executive Director/CEO of TWS. “We established the Leadership Institute in 2006 to address the upcoming shortage because we feel we have a responsibility to prepare our members to meet this pressing need.”

A committee of TWS members and staff selected participants based on the applicants’ academic record, demonstrated leadership capability, and demonstrated level of excellence either in their current position or in their position as a leader of a Chapter or Section of TWS.

This year’s participants are:

- **Christopher Ayers**, Graduate Research Assistant, Mississippi State University
- **Dominic Bachman**, Refuge Wildlife Biologist, Modoc National Wildlife Refuge, California
- **Megan Clayton**, Assistant Professor and Extension Range Specialist, Texas AgriLife Extension Service
- **Megan Cook**, Assistant to the Science Advisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Virginia
- **Richard Gerhold**, Post-doctoral Research Associate, University of Tennessee
- **Serra Hoagland**, Ph.D. Student, Northern Arizona University and Biological Scientist, Forest Service Southern Research Station, North Carolina
- **Aletris Neils**, Ph.D. Student, University of Arizona and Director, Conservation CATalyst
- **Liisa Schmoele**, Fish and Wildlife Biologist, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Columbia Ecological Services Field Office, Missouri
- **Virginia Tilden**, Conservation Biologist, Penn State University at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania
- **Valorie Titus**, Ph.D. Candidate, Binghamton University, Curatorial Science Fellow (Herpetology), Wildlife Conservation Society, New York

“As professionals, these future leaders will face some difficult challenges in the years to come,” says Hutchins. “The Leadership Institute was designed to groom them to face the many and varying conservation and management issues that lie ahead.”

From May through October, the participants will complete a wide variety of exercises, which include reading and discussing leadership materials, giving presentations to peer groups, leading seminars, and developing summary documents regarding professional leadership. During TWS’ Annual Conference in Portland, the participants will meet for focused discussions, serve as mentors for students, and attend Council meetings.

The Leadership Institute is important because many young professionals entering leadership positions do not necessarily have the skills to successfully manage large groups or complicated programs. The Institute therefore gives these exceptional young people the management, mentoring, and organizational skills they need to become exceptional leaders.

The program has been popular and growing since its introduction in 2006, and each year has received many more applications than it can award. Past participants can attest to its popularity. According to a recent graduate of the program, “Few opportunities exist for young professionals to enhance their experiences for career development, and more specifically, for becoming active leaders within their professional realms. Therefore, this was a unique opportunity indeed.”

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The Wildlife Society was founded in 1937 and is a non-profit scientific and educational association of nearly 11,000 professional wildlife biologists and managers, dedicated to excellence in wildlife stewardship through science and education. Our mission is to represent and serve the professional community of scientists, managers, educators, technicians, planners, and others who work actively to study, manage, and conserve wildlife and its habitats worldwide. For more info visit www.wildlife.org

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