



ALASKA CHAPTER

February 27, 2026

The Wildlife Society Council

RE: The Student Liaison to Council

Dear TWS Council,

We, the Alaska Chapter of The Wildlife Society, submit this letter of concurrence in support of the Student Development Working Group's recommendation that the Student Liaison be granted full voting rights on the TWS Council.

Since the position was established in 2009, the request to grant the Student Liaison voting rights has been raised nearly every year; however, the requests have thus far been dismissed. We feel that now is the time to revisit this issue once again and ask that Council seriously consider granting the Student Liaison full voting rights. The student body of TWS represents the next generation(s) of wildlife professionals in a time of unprecedented environmental and conservation challenges — a point that is continually referenced by TWS professionals and leadership. Additionally, students comprise nearly one third of The Wildlife Society's membership. Yet, students have thus far been denied an equal voice in the Society's highest decision-making body. Without true representation, we believe it will continue to be difficult to foster engagement and leadership within the student body. A Student Liaison who cannot vote is not empowered to represent students in any meaningful or consequential way.

Despite the enormous challenges facing future generations, student membership within TWS has been on the decline. New student memberships have declined by over 28%, with the most significant drop in 2022 and student member retention has declined by over 10% since 2024. Furthermore, student involvement in TWS organizational units has also been lacking. A positive and impactful step towards reaching membership and engagement goals is to tangibly show current and prospective student members that their voices carry equal weight within the Society. To deny this population a voting representative on Council is to marginalize a substantial and essential component of the Society. Students bring diverse and unique perspectives to the table; sidelining their voices also risks missing opportunities to engage with their needs and priorities and support the next generation of conservation leaders. Granting the Student Liaison full voting rights would correct this imbalance and provide a concrete, effective means of ensuring student voices are heard, valued, and considered in decisions at the highest level of governance.

We strongly urge Council to initiate the process required to make the Student Liaison a voting member of Council, including any necessary changes to the Bylaws. Empowering student leadership through voting rights is essential to the long-term relevance, equity, and strength of The Wildlife Society. We believe these considerations are critical as the Society seeks to fulfill its commitment to the stated goals of the Strategic Plan in fostering an inclusive, diverse, and representative community of wildlife professionals at every career stage.

On behalf of the Executive Board and membership of the Alaska Chapter of The Wildlife Society,

Ryan Mollnow

President, Alaska Chapter of The Wildlife Society