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WILDLIFE PROFESSIONALS HONOR 58th WYOMING LEGISLATURE

LARAMIE, WY...Professional wildlife managers named the 58th Wyoming Legislature as their "Citizens of the Year" yesterday. The Wyoming Chapter of the Wildlife Society, an international organization of professional wildlife managers, presented the award to Senate President Grant Larson, Jackson, and Speaker of the House Randall Luthi, Freedom at their annual meeting.

Wyoming Chapter President Daryl Lutz said the Society "wanted to recognize the dedication and foresight of the Legislature for the creation and funding of the state's Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust program."

Lutz said while many are quick to criticize the Legislature, the Society is impressed with their collective efforts to enhance the state's wildlife and the habitats they require to survive. "The Trust program is a huge step to help maintain our wildlife legacy," Lutz said, "and we wanted to thank the people who helped to make it a reality."

In accepting the award, Luthi said he was "honored to represent my colleagues in the House. This is a great honor for all of us." Luthi noted the Legislature is a diverse group of people from all over the state, but they found common ground in creation and building of the Trust program. He said the program was not a new idea, "but while we have the revenues to protect and enhance our wildlife and the lands they need to flourish, it is a great opportunity."

Larson agreed, noting that the honor represented recognition from the professionals who "dedicate their lives and effort to making Wyoming's wildlife legacy continue. You are the people on the front lines, those who make the hard decisions. That means a great deal to me, and to the other members of the Senate."

Bob Budd, Executive Director of the WWNRT, said the honor was "well deserved," and thanked Luthi and Larson for their leadership in helping to develop the program. "This is a partnership program, and the Legislature is vital to that partnership," he said. Budd also cited the efforts of the Travel, Recreation and Wildlife committees, the Select Committee that interfaces with the Trust program, and individual legislators who worked to develop the program.

Dr. Robert Brown, North Carolina State University, president of the international parent organization, The Wildlife Society, said he had never seen a state recognize a legislative body for their efforts. "This is a great step, and very appropriate" Brown said. "We

forget sometimes how important our elected officials are, and how much they are dedicated to wildlife and wildlife habitat. I am glad I was here to see this happen.”

Larson and Luthi received a boisterous standing ovation from the 200 wildlife professionals in attendance, but one summed it up simply in congratulating the Legislative leaders afterward.

“This is really great,” he said. “I’m glad we did this. You deserve it.”

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