The College of Natural Resources is requesting that the Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources be changed to the Department of Fish and Wildlife Sciences.
Date: September 29, 2011

To: Provost Baker

From: Kurt Pregitzer and Kerry Reese

Re: Name Change for Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources

The faculty members of Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources have been deliberating changing its name for several years. We sought a name that is current and more fully describes the mission and vision of the various programs and activities of the department. After discussions with interested people, it became apparent that the word ‘resources’ is viewed as dated, rooted in the past, appears to be focused on commodities of harvested fish and game species, and does not resonate with younger students and professionals.

As part of our process, a short survey of possible names was sent in early September via email to all of our current students, alumni, and constituents (donors, Idaho Fish and Game, on-campus and off-campus collaborators, etc). We asked each respondent to prioritize their choices which included five new names and retention of the current name. We received 151 responses and 80% of current students preferred a new name as did 72% of all respondents. This indicates that our current name is not adequately representing our activities and programs and may not be helping attract students to the department.

The proposed name with the greatest support (24%) is Department of Fish and Wildlife Sciences. No other name received more than 19% support. Of those wanting us to retain the current name, 48% preferred Fish and Wildlife Sciences as their second choice. When the first and second choices were pooled, Fish and Wildlife Sciences received 29% of the votes; no other new name received more than 16%.

With these results in mind, the faculty members within the department, after extensive discussions, held an electronic vote the week of September 15-21 to address the seconded motion that the name be changed to Department of Fish and Wildlife Sciences. The motion carried 13-1-1.

A change to Department of Fish and Wildlife Sciences may not seem major to some, but it places ‘sciences’ clearly in the department name. This creates an expectation in prospective students that scientific methods and quantitative approaches to questions and problems will be topics of study. Science is a broad term which is value neutral, but indicates that management of fish and wildlife populations, habitats and systems is based on a sound foundation of science, and that all species of fishes and wildlife (harvested, nongame and endangered species) and their habitats are subject to scientific inquiry. ‘Sciences’ aligns with the fact that all departmental faculty members conduct science with the goal to provide information and understanding to aid natural resources managers in their management and policy activities.

We respectfully ask that you support our proposed name change and forward our request through the appropriate channels.