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River otters as flagships for aquatic conservation: Why this approach doesn't fit the 'North American Model of Wildlife Conservation

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**University of Wyoming – National Park Service
2015 Harlow Summer Seminars at the AMK Ranch**

THURSDAY, July 2nd 2015, 5:30pm

River otters as flagships for aquatic conservation: Why this approach doesn't fit the "North American Model of Wildlife Conservation"

**Tom Serfass and Kelly Pearce
Frostburg State University and University of Maryland**

Over the last decade the so-called "North American Model of Wildlife Conservation" (NAM) has been among the most widely portrayed aspects of wildlife conservation in North America. NAM has achieved virtually unconditional support within the wildlife profession despite little review. The re-establishment of native predators in many areas of North America often has been received negatively by some segments of the hunting community, which contrasts with NAM's portrayal of hunters as uniformly supporting conservation. The North American river otter (*Lontra canadensis*) is an example of a predator widely reintroduced in the U.S. that has sometimes been depicted negatively among some hunters because of its fish eating habits. However, the river otter is generally considered positively by outdoor enthusiasts. The intention of our program is to initiate a critical review of current paradigms regarding wildlife conservation in North America by: 1) reviewing the origins, dissemination, and promotion of NAM; 2) questioning the appropriateness of NAM's portrayal of recreational hunting/trapping as the equivalent of conservation, especially in relation to river otters and other carnivores; 3) considering whether NAM was conceived to promote holistic wildlife conservation or recreational hunting/trapping; and 4) identifying concerns about the acceptance of NAM as the primary approach for advancing wildlife conservation in the 21st century, focusing on the conservation of river otters. We argue that until subjected to objective validation, NAM should be treated as no more than a proposed approach for wildlife conservation. Also, our presentation will review the potential of river otters to serve as "flagships" for promoting aquatic conservation and why such an approach may be received negatively by some representatives of state wildlife agencies.



Barbecue at 5:30 with hamburgers, veggie burgers, hot dogs, chips, salads and dessert for a \$5 donation. The talk starts at 6:30 in the historic Berol Lodge at the AMK Ranch. Turn right when entering Leek's Marina parking lot in Grand Teton National Park. Reservations not required.