

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

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Dear Dr. Fisher:

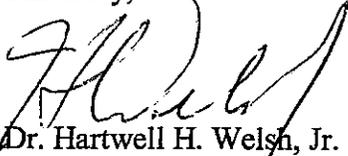
I have agreed to organize and chair a session of the 2000 Annual Conference of the Western Section of The Wildlife Society. The conference will be held 27-29 January 2000 at the Riverside Convention Center in Riverside, California. The session is entitled, "Ecology and Conservation of Amphibians and Reptiles," and I would like to invite you to present a paper in this session. Presentations should be 15 minutes with 5 minutes for questions. Enclosed is a call for papers, abstract directions, and guidelines for presentations. Abstracts should be submitted to me at the address listed above. Please make note that the abstract deadline has been extended to 15 November, and a poster session may be organized if there is enough interest.

All speakers are expected to register for the meeting, which can be done by visiting the Western Section web site at www.tws-west.org. Registrants will receive a discount if they are already Section members. Additionally, non-members who become members through meeting registration will receive a discount. I have enclosed meeting information and a membership application, and additional information can be obtained at the web site as it becomes available.

All papers presented at the annual meeting of the Western Section are eligible for publication in Transactions of the Western Section of the Wildlife Society. I encourage you to submit presented papers for publication. The 1999 volume will contain nearly 20 papers and is now being sent to all Section members as part of their membership.

I encourage you to pass this information along to colleagues, undergraduates, and graduate students who are interested in the ecology and conservation of amphibians and reptiles and may also wish to present a paper in this session.

Sincerely,



Dr. Hartwell H. Welsh, Jr.
Research Wildlife Ecologist/Herpetologist

DIRECT EFFECTS OF CONTROLLED BURNS AND WILDFIRES ON
HERPETOFAUNA IN COASTAL SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

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The literature on vertebrate mortality from fire in southern California is very sparse and the general consensus in the literature is that there is little or no direct effect on reptiles or amphibians from "natural" fires. We visited multiple controlled burns and wildfires during 1998-1999 to measure the direct effect of these incidences on reptiles. The direct effect was determined by either walking the fire line in controlled burns or visiting burn incident sites directly after the fire was put under control, and identifying and counting all reptiles and amphibians present in the burn footprint. Individuals were determined to be either alive, injured but alive, or dead at the site of observation. We observed more than 14 species of reptiles and amphibians dead at these burn sites representing over 100 individuals. The mortality associated with the burns does not appear to be related to the size of the burn as some of the smallest burns had the greatest mortality per hectare. The mortality for reptiles and amphibians observed was much greater than had been reported or suspected in this region. The highest mortality rates were associated with non-native grassland habitats and represented only a few of the total species observed within the burns. Thus although there does appear to be a dramatic effect of the burns (controlled or "natural") on reptiles and amphibians, the majority of this impact appears to be in non-native habitat with a less diverse fauna. Burns in high-quality habitat often had very few, if any animals that were killed directly from the fires.