Summary of Assessment Results
MS in Wildlife Biology and Conservation, Spring 2012

Note: the name of the degree was recently changed from “Biology” to “Biological Sciences” to be consistent with other degrees in the department.

1. Enrolment and degree recipients: during AY 2011-2012 22 students were enrolled in this degree, and 3 students graduated (13.6% graduation rate). Number of graduates is lower than in FY10, although the number of PhD students with a wildlife concentration is increasing (5 of the 10 graduates in Biological Sciences in this AY had a Wildlife Biology concentration).

2. All students who started within the past two years completed the initial assessment at the start of the degree program, and completed a defense of their proposal (the comprehensive exam) within the first two semesters. This is a marked improvement over previous years, when the comprehensive exam was frequently not completed until the second year or later. This may be the result of regular meetings (twice per year) of the chair with all students in their first year.

3. Supplemental information to the annual report was supplied by 17 students. Of these, two students had a paper accepted for publication in AY11-12. The 3 students who graduated prepared a total of 5 manuscripts for submission to journals (1.7 manuscripts per student), consistent with our expectation of 1-2 manuscripts per student for submission.

4. These 17 students presented oral presentations or posters on their research at 4 national (outside of Alaska) or international conferences and 12 local conferences, and they gave one additional presentation (e.g., as an invited speaker) during AY-11-12. This is a rate of 1.0 presentations per student per year.

5. These same 17 students were awarded 11 fellowships, scholarship, and awards external to UAF, and 9 fellowships, scholarships and awards from UAF (e.g., Global Change grant). This equates to 1.18 awards per student. They also received 4 UAF travel awards.

6. All 3 graduates are currently employed by wildlife conservation agencies.

Comments: overall, student success continues at a similar rate to previous years. While we do not have publication rates for this cohort yet, manuscript production is similar to the past and we anticipate the similar rates of publication as well (approx. 1 publication per MS student). We have not collected presentation or award data prior to this year, so we have no basis on which to make a comparison. The presentation and award rates seem reasonable. The introduction of a proposal writing course in Fall 2012 (see below) may improve this.

Assessment improvements to be made:

1. We need to implement the collection of assessment data from additional faculty members at defenses.

2. We need to initiate surveys of common employers of MS students.
3. We need to improve our ability to track student employment. This has been an issue for a number of years and is not easily resolved.

Program and Course Changes
The emphasis over the past year has been in increasing the number of courses available that provide training in professional skills such as writing manuscripts and proposals, strengthening teaching skills and improving statistical capacity. The following offerings reflect specific changes to the Biological Sciences program that affect many of the Wildlife Biology majors:

1. Scientific Writing, Editing, and Revising was offered twice in 2011-2012. While we would like to be able to offer this every semester, currently the lack of faculty prevents us from doing so.
2. Research Design was offered twice in 2011-2012. We hope to be able to offer this every semester into the future.
3. A new seminar course, will be offered in Fall 2012. This will initially be an every other year offering but we will change to every year if possible.
4. A new seminar course on basic programming in R was offered in Spring 2012. This course was taught by an adjunct and currently we are not able to offer it regularly, but we are investigating opportunities for doing so.

Other program and course changes:

Program Changes
1. None.
Course Additions
1. A new graduate course in community ecology will be offered in Fall 2012.

Course Modifications
1. WLF 625 was changed from a 3 to 4 credit offering to assure that students get adequate exposure to the range of topics in quantitative population ecology in an appropriate sequence.

Course Deletions. These courses had not been taught in more than 5 years.
1. WLF 431, Wildlife Law and Policy
2. WLF 603, Biotelemetry