

Letter of recommendation for David D. James for the TWS Alaska Chapter Lifetime Achievement Award

24 February 2017

I heartily support the nomination of Mr. David D. James by TWS Alaska Chapter member Mr. Doug Larsen. My professional association with Mr. James extends back to my time as a field assistant on his Master's project on wolves in the northeastern Arctic in 1978. Later, as regional supervisor for the Division of Wildlife Conservation, Mr. James supervised me as research coordinator during 2008-2015. During my association with Mr. James, I have been greatly impressed by his drive and passion for the resource, and his compassion for the people around him. He was and is truly a man who leads and inspires by example. His humble demeanor, coupled with his wonderful sense of humor, made him a joy to work with, even when the going got tough.

There are many examples that I could use to illustrate why he deserves this award, but one achievement above all else exemplifies his lasting contribution to the field of wildlife conservation in Alaska, if not North America as a whole. And that was the resolve and determination he displayed in reintroducing wood bison to Alaska. The day I started work Mr. James had just returned from Canada with several truckloads of wood bison for the pending reintroduction, which we all thought would happen in the span of one or two years. However, due to the machinations of state and federal bureaucracy, this process would become a seven-year slog. There were several times when it seemed that things were at an impasse. Without going into detail, there were concerns about the endangered status of the species which effectively prevented it from being introduced. Roadblocks were put up by both federal and state government, as well as private entities, that seemed at times insurmountable. I am convinced that without Mr. James dogged determination, we would not see wood bison on the landscape today. He made it his goal to see this thing through, come hell or high water. As much as he wanted to retire, he wanted more to see his dream come to fruition. He was able to engage a passionate cadre of capable biologists to make this happen. But without him, it wouldn't have.

As Mr. Larsen points out in his letter of nomination, there are many reasons why Mr. James should be recognized with the Lifetime Achievement Award. His contributions to the management and conservation of wildlife resources in Alaska are many. But in my view, it is his vital role in ensuring the reintroduction of a large native herbivore to the wilds of Alaska that stand above all of his other achievements. One hundred years from now, I hope that his name will still be associated with what we all hope will be a lasting legacy in the annals of Alaskan wildlife conservation.

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