22 October, 2014

TO: Sarah Mangelsdorf, Provost

FROM: John Karl Scholz, Dean

RE: Request to Change Academic Program Name: Biological Aspects of Conservation (to “Conservation Biology”)

CC: Gery Essenmacher, Associate Dean for Student Academic Affairs, L&S
Elaine Klein, Assistant Dean for Academic Planning, L&S
Jocelyn Milner, Associate Provost and Director, Academic Planning and Analysis
Scott Owczarek, Registrar
Don Waller, Professor and Chair, BAC and Botany
Eric Wilcots, Associate Dean for the Natural and Mathematical Sciences, L&S

On October 7, 2014, the Academic Planning Councils of L&S and CALS considered the attached request to change the name of the undergraduate L&S major in Biological Aspects of Conservation. The major is currently available in combination with the L&S Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degree programs, with Honors available. The program can also be completed as an additional major for students in other undergraduate degree programs. The major serves about 100 students (averaging 61.2 degrees awarded per year). Current students unanimously support the proposed name of “Conservation Biology”.

The proposal authors have sought counsel and support from departments and programs that share an interest in broad ecological conditions and conservation, as well as in biology more generally. All have offered support for this change, which was also endorsed by our colleagues on the CALS Academic Planning Council.

The L&S Academic Planning Council was pleased to approve the attached request to change the name of “Biological Aspects of Conservation” (major code 108) to “Conservation Biology”. If you have questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Effective Fall 2015; all students will transition to the new name.
September 26, 2014

To: Undergraduate Academic Planning Committee, College of Letters & Science  
From: Don Waller, Chair of Biological Aspects of Conservation Major, College of Letters & Science  
Re: Proposal to change the name of the Biological Aspects of Conservation Major to “Conservation Biology"

Dear Colleagues,

It is with great enthusiasm that I write to you on behalf of the Biological Aspects of Conservation (BAC) major to propose changing the name of the major to “Conservation Biology.” Students, BAC faculty, and related departments on campus unanimously support the name change, reflecting the necessity and appropriateness of the new title.

Since the major was established in the 1940’s, the name of the discipline has changed. The “Biological Aspects of Conservation” title is outdated and the “Conservation Biology” title more accurately reflects the training provided to students in the current BAC curriculum and the activities in which students and BAC faculty engage. The major is repeatedly referenced to as “Conservation Biology” by both students and faculty and has been since the 1995 and 2006 program reviews where the program is referred to as training in conservation biology. As such, a title change is long overdue.

Students in the BAC major are passionate about their curriculum and the many impactful activities in which they engage on campus, in the community, and abroad. The BAC students deserve a major title that accurately reflects the meaningful work they do both inside and outside the classroom.

If you have any questions or concerns, certainly don’t hesitate to contact us. We thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Don Waller  
Chair of Biological Aspects of Conservation Major  
College of Letters and Science  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  
232 Birge Hall  
430 Lincoln Drive  
Madison, WI 53706  
Phone: 608-263-2042
Proposal to change the name of the
Biological Aspects of Conservation major to
"Conservation Biology"

Don Waller, Chair June 12, 2014

First, note that changing the name of the Biological Aspects of Conservation (BAC) major requires two steps:

1. Preparing and submitting a proposal for the name change (this document), and
2. Surveying students and related departments and programs to assess their support for the proposed change. Related departments and programs that support the name change will be asked to provide brief letters of endorsement to include in the final proposal we submit to the College of Letters and Science.

Proposal

The Chair, faculty committee of advisors, and Student Services Coordinator associated with the Biological Aspects of Conservation (BAC) major propose to change the name of this undergraduate major program in the College of Letters and Sciences to "Conservation Biology." We propose changing the name of the BAC major to "Conservation Biology" at this time for the following reasons:

✓ The name of the discipline has changed, as noted below, meaning that the BAC major should be renamed to reflect this change in our discipline. Conservation biology represents the modern equivalent of what BAC has always represented.
✓ Conservation biology matches other programs across the country that routinely use this label (e.g. the University of Minnesota).
✓ "Conservation biology" more fairly and accurately reflects the training that we provide via the current BAC curriculum (which now exceeds the narrowly biological aspects of conservation)
✓ The activities of BAC faculty are more accurately reflected by this new name.

Background

Students can complete the BAC major under the L&S BA or BS degree requirements. It was established in the early 1940s as a cross-college (L&S and CALS) major for training professionals as game wardens, ranger naturalists, museum workers, and field conservationists. The curriculum was originally designed by Prof. of Botany Norman Fassett and Prof. of Game Management (now Forest and Wildlife Ecology) Aldo Leopold. It thus appears to represent the oldest such program in the country – a tradition of which we are proud. Over time, of course, the major has changed to keep up with changes in the field and corresponding changes in student interests, UW course offerings, and demands for suitable professional expertise from potential employers. We remain focused on providing high quality training in the biological and related disciplines most relevant to conservation biology that matches these changes in knowledge, perspective, and career needs within the field.
One change within the major that has not occurred, however, is the name. Despite training students in conservation biology since the founding of the major, conservation biology did not exist as an identifiable field until the 1980s. Then, within a few years, we suddenly had books, journals, and scientific societies all embracing that moniker. These developments included the creation of UW's MS program in Conservation Biology and Sustainable Development (CBSD) program in 1989-90 within our Institute of Environmental Studies (now the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies), again one of the first of its kind nationally. The CBSD program has since morphed into the Professional Masters program in Environmental Conservation established in 2014, still within the Nelson Institute. This name change reflects a major re-visioning and reorganization of the program including an effort to broaden the training it provides to include suitable social sciences and professional skills training. Retitling the BAC program as “conservation biology” thus more fairly and accurately reflects the field as it exists today.

Additional rationale

Students remain well-satisfied with the training they receive in the BAC major, but many have begun to ask why we don't use the simpler and more modern "Conservation Biology" title. In our efforts to serve both new and in-course students, we are eager to embrace a name that is both simpler and more widely recognizable. Indeed, many students and some faculty in the program have referred to the major or its students as "conservation biology" for years, particularly when talking with friends, families, and associates beyond UW-Madison.

We also considered how this name change reflects on our historic connections to the field and our expected impacts on the field into the future. If Aldo Leopold and Norman Fassett were still with us, we feel that they would strongly support this name change as it is completely in keeping with their original intent and the course content of the major. Indeed, Leopold is widely considered to be the intellectual father of conservation biology. So adopting this name embraces the deep conservation tradition that we embrace at the University of Wisconsin.

In moving forward, however, we want to make it simple for our students, faculty, and alumni to link their training in this major to the now instantly recognizable label "conservation biology." Fields develop and UW remains a national and international leader in this field of research and training. It will be easier for others including colleagues and potential students and employers to identify our programs as contemporary and in this field if we label this major "conservation biology."

Oddly, the issue of changing the name of the program to "conservation biology" did not come up in the 2006 program review. However, throughout the review and self-study documents, the phrase “conservation biology” was repeatedly used to describe the program curriculum and training provided to students. The 2006 self-study – authored by the program chair, Stanley Dodson – states, “…our program has a unique appeal to students passionate about conservation biology” and that students graduate “…prepared for graduate study in a wide range of conservation biology programs.” Additionally, the authors of the 1995
program review argue, “We recommend that the Biological Aspects of Conservation major be continued… to provide a broad interdepartmental and intercollege major in conservation biology.” Therefore, although no explicit recommendation was made to change the name of the major, the program was clearly identified as a major in conservation biology, internally and externally. Given our continuing commitment to train students in conservation biology, the requested name change is appropriate.

Potential Overlap

If the proposed name is similar or related to existing majors or programs, it is required that we seek brief letters of endorsement from relevant majors or programs to signify that they do not object.

There are other programs at UW-Madison that include curricula related to biological and ecological disciplines. Most notably, the department that Leopold founded, Game Management, became Wildlife Ecology and is now part of the department of Forest and Wildlife Ecology. Their name changes reflect the broadening of their field to include broader concerns with ecological conditions and conservation. Many students working in organismal and ecological biology within the departments of Landscape Architecture, Botany, and Zoology are also concerned with conservation. Finally, there are many students within our new Environmental Studies major who share interests in conservation (although all these students must declare ES as a 2nd major). There may be a few students in the new Environmental Science major who share these interests as well. Students with interests in conservation may also be attracted to the People-Environment Interaction track within the Geography major.

Among these programs, the BAC curriculum is unique in two ways. First, our curriculum specifically focuses on the science (biology, ecology, and relevant physical and social sciences) that are most central to conserving biological populations and habitats. Second, because BAC stands apart from any one department, it is able to take advantage of the quite broad array of relevant courses offered across many departments in two Colleges. This broad curriculum and element of choice may be unique in stand-alone UW majors. In addition, it equips students with the responsibility and ability to seek out knowledge and think across disciplines rather than focusing on a single one. These qualities set the BAC major apart from the other programs mentioned above and matches the broad domain now spanned by conservation biology.

Responses from other units

To proactively address any issues of potential overlap, we are soliciting responses to this proposal from the academic programs that could be interested and/or affected by the name change, including:

- In L&S, the Department of Zoology (via Chair Hardin and BAC faculty A. Ives); the Biology Major Program (Donna Fernandez); the Department of Botany (Don Waller); and the Department of Geography (Kris Olds).
BAC Name change proposal

- In the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies, Director Paul Robbins and the Chair of the Environmental Conservation Program (J. Silbernagel)
- In the CALS, the Departments of Forest and Wildlife Ecology (Bill Karasov, Chair) and Landscape Architecture (John Harrington, Chair)

Implementation Plan

We have just conducted a poll of our current BAC students. The unanimous response so far is that BAC students supports this name change with many citing reasons like those outlined here. The strongly supportive student feedback leads us to think that we should request Turn-Key rather than the Phase-In approach to implementing the name change. The Turn-Key implementation would also be simpler to administer.

It is our hope that the proposed name becomes effective by the end of the Fall 2014-2015 term.
16 October 2014

Don Waller  
Chair, Department of Botany  
232b Birge Hall

Dear Professor Waller,

On October 7, 2014 the CALS Academic Planning Council voted unanimously to approve your request to change the name of the Biological Aspects of Conservation major to Conservation Biology. The Council expressed no reservations in allowing the name change to move forward. Thank you for bringing this question before the CALS APC, we wish you well with the program.

Kathryn VandenBosch  
Dean and Director  
College of Agricultural and Life Sciences

cc: Jocelyn Milner
September 18, 2014

To: Professor Donald Waller, Chair, Biological Aspects of Conservation Major, College of Letters and Science  
From: Professor Donna Fernandez and Heidi Goodrich-Blair, Biology Major Program Co-Chairs

Re: Proposal to change the name of the Biological Aspects of Conservation major to “Conservation Biology”

Dear Prof. Waller,

The members of the Biology Major Program Committee met on September 11, 2014 to discuss the document entitled: “Proposal to change the name of the Biological Aspects of Conservation major to “Conservation Biology,” and unanimously voted to support this name change for the reasons articulated in the document. The BMPC agrees that the name change is an important step towards transparency that aligns the program’s name with the program’s curriculum, faculty research activities, and the modern nature of the discipline.

Best regards,

Donna Fernandez  
L&S Biology Major Co-Chair  
Professor, Department of Botany  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  
Department of Botany  
B215 Birge Hall  
430 Lincoln Dr  
Madison, WI 53706  
Phone: 608-262-9033

Heidi Goodrich-Blair  
CALS Biology Major Co-Chair  
Professor, Department of Bacteriology  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  
Department of Bacteriology  
4500 Microbial Sciences Building  
1550 Linden Dr  
Madison, WI 53706  
Phone: 608-265-4537
On 9/9/14, Kris Olds wrote:

Dear Don, There are no concerns, whatsoever, in Geography with this name change.
Best,
Kris

On 08/31/14, Don Waller wrote:

Kris,
A gentle reminder here . . . I attach the current version of the request to change the name of the L&S major in: “Biological Aspects of Conservation” to: “Conservation Biology” The proposal and justification for this are attached. In order to move forward in a timely way this Fall, could we ask that Geography pen a short letter to support this name change within L&S? This could be sent to both me and Elaine Klein at the same time (to save time). Thanks very much!

Don

Don Waller
John T. Curtis Professor of Botany and Chair:
Department of Botany
Biological Aspects of Conservation Major
University of Wisconsin – Madison
Don Waller, Chair  
Department of Botany  

September 2, 2014  

Dear Don:  

The Department of Landscape Architecture supports the proposed name change of the L&S major “Biological Aspects of Conservation” to “Conservation Biology.” The justifications are reasonable and we find no conflict with our programs.  

Sincerely,  

John A. Harrington, Professor and Chair
4 September 2014

To: Elaine Klein, Assistant Dean, College of Letters and Science
   Don Waller, Professor, Department of Botany, Biological Aspects of Conservation Program

From: Paul Robbins, Director, Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies

RE: Proposed Program Name Change: From Biological Aspects of Conservation to Conservation Biology

The Nelson Institute Director’s Office has considered the proposal from Professor Waller, dated June 12, 2014, to rename the undergraduate program in Biological Aspects of Conservation (BAC) to Conservation Biology. We recognize the need to update the program name to better represent accepted current language in the discipline, in sync with related programs in the country and professional organizations such as the Society for Conservation Biology. We also acknowledge that the proposed name could better reflect the scientific training provided by the curriculum as a sub-discipline of biology.

As you know, our graduate program in Conservation Biology and Sustainable Development has been redesigned as a professional master’s degree, and as of this June, changed in name to an M.S. in Environmental Conservation. While we felt the term ‘Conservation Biology’ was no longer as relevant for this applied professional degree designed to train conservation leaders, we believe that the timing to change the undergraduate degree name from BAC to Conservation Biology will be complementary to our graduate program name change, providing the foundational science behind the practice of conservation. Further, because the two programs serve different academic levels (graduate and undergraduate) and different audiences of students (traditional and non-traditional), we don’t see any issues of overlap. Meanwhile, we continue to serve Nelson Institute graduate students interested in pursuing research in conservation biology through the Environment and Resources program and advised by our Nelson Institute faculty, including many valued affiliates from L&S.

We are pleased to offer our support for the BAC to Conservation Biology name change proposal, with the understanding and full confidence that we will work cooperatively as planning for this important area of environmental studies proceeds. Separately, the Environmental Conservation Program Committee will consider the proposal for this name change and will send a supplemental note acknowledging their support and any concerns.

cc: Professor Paul Zedler, Associate Director for Research and Education, Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies
To: Don Waller, Professor and Chair, Dept. Botany  
From: Bill Karasov, Chair  
Re: name of Conservation Biology major  

On Monday Sept. 8, 2014 at our Department meeting we discussed the proposal "Proposal to change the name of the Biological Aspects of Conservation major to "Conservation Biology". Subsequently, a motion was passed to support this proposal (19 yes, 0 no, 0 abstain).  

I wish you success in this endeavor.  

Sincerely,  

William Karasov  
Professor and Chair
September 24, 2014

To: Prof. Donald Waller, Chair, Biological Aspects of Conservation Major, College of Letters and Science

From: Prof. Don Waller, Chair, Department of Botany

Re: Proposal to change the name of the Biological Aspects of Conservation Major to “Conservation Biology”

Dear Prof. Waller,

The Department of Botany has voted in unanimous support for the proposed name change of the Biological Aspects of Conservation major to “Conservation Biology.” We find the justifications clear and compelling. As there are no conflicts with the Botany program, we welcome and encourage this change.

Sincerely,

Don Waller
Professor and Chair of Botany
College of Letters and Science
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Department of Botany
232 Birge Hall
430 Lincoln Drive
Madison, WI 53706
Phone: 608-263-2042
September 25, 2014

To: Prof. Donald Waller, Chair, Biological Aspects of Conservation Major, College of Letters and Science

From: Jeff Hardin Chair, Department of Zoology

Re: Proposal to change the name of the Biological Aspects of Conservation Major to “Conservation Biology”

Dear Don,

The Instructional Program Committee of the Department of Zoology enthusiastically supports the proposed name change of the Biological Aspects of Conservation major to “Conservation Biology.” The reasons for doing so are compelling.

Good luck as you move forward with your plans for this important major.

Sincerely yours,

Jeff Hardin
Professor and Chair
Department of Zoology