

Commentary

State of the Berryman Institute

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THE JACK H. BERRYMAN INSTITUTE (BI) was created in 1993 at Utah State University (USU) to help resolve issues of human–wildlife conflict and to improve education on human–wildlife interactions. In 2002, the BI expanded to include Mississippi State University (MSU) as an eastern base of operations, and, together, BI-West (USU) and BI-East (MSU) aim to support research and education in human–wildlife interactions. BI operations were long funded by a federal earmark on the USDA/APHIS/Wildlife Services (WS) budget, but this funding was lost when the U.S. Congress eliminated all earmarks for federal fiscal year 2011.

Since the loss of federal funding, the BI has been in “baseline survival” mode while seeking ways to retain its faculty, staff, and student positions using alternative funding sources. Some of this funding has been obtained from the parent states (Utah and Mississippi) or university budget adjustments, and, thus, the core BI personnel remain supported. However, positions that have been vacated since the budget cuts cannot be refilled. Additionally, several educational programs implemented by the BI, including distance education courses and academic advising for WS employees, and activities of the USU student organization at BI-West, have had to be terminated. Also discontinued is the request for proposals program implemented by BI-West to support university research and graduate students with solution-aimed projects on human–wildlife interactions in the western United States.

Despite budget cuts and programming losses, the BI continues to have the support of many wildlife professionals that want to see the Institute’s mission of supporting research and education in human–wildlife interactions endure. BI administrators, thanks to the support of their respective university administrations, are using new resources to support personnel and programming. These include fees for conferences and symposia, cost-recoverable

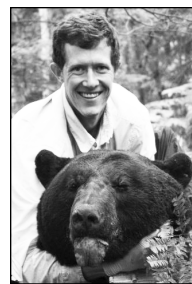
workshops, and sales from BI publications. The BI’s peer-reviewed journal *Human–Wildlife Interactions* is currently sustainable through page charges, subscriptions, advertisements, and sales of Institute publications, such as management guides, monographs, and conference proceedings. Also, USU will continue to use the Jack H. Berryman endowment to support undergraduate academic scholarships.

Many research and educational organizations have been affected by budgetary constraints in recent years. The BI is working hard with its federal partner, WS, to find innovative ways of continuing its mission. With the collective consideration and support of all those invested in resolving problems involving human–wildlife interactions, the BI hopefully will weather the storm and continue to serve its nationally recognized role in wildlife science in the United States.

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