

Refine the tools or replace the toolbox? Unearthing the drivers of “good” wildlife governance

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Wildlife governance generally refers to particular constellations of policy, actions, and affairs of a state, organization, or people to resolve problems and enhance public benefits. Governance is often characterized as an imperceptible or simplistic phenomenon though it is a critical part of human-wildlife relations. However, the historical model of wildlife governance is now experiencing a legitimacy crisis because it was not designed to take seriously enough evolving social, political, economic, and ecological realities. Without much regard for governance design, there has been a detectable preference among researchers and practitioners to refine tools in use rather than redesign the toolbox in which the tools reside.

My research program engages a systematic approach to the study of governance to reveal how arrangements of laws, rules, decisions, practices, and stakeholders constrain and facilitate the provision of positive human-wildlife relations in the so-called Anthropocene. This seminar will discuss the current governance model’s design, its confronts, proposed solutions, and how my research program informs the design of a model for the future by answering two broad research questions: 1) under what socio-political conditions does wildlife governance thrive and decay?, and 2) what means, mechanisms, and instruments yield legitimate wildlife governance? I will also describe the growth of my research program since arriving at Texas State University, a trend that has made the Serenari lab an internationally recognized research program conducting actionable research on wildlife governance in Texas and abroad.