

SUTER SCIENCE SEMINARS 2020-21

Difficult Decisions: The Role of Value-Focused Thinking in Wildlife Disease Management

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Outbreaks of disease in wildlife populations can have far-reaching consequences for biodiversity conservation, agricultural production, and human health. From a management standpoint, wildlife disease is often considered a “wicked” problem due to ecological complexity, competing stakeholder objectives, and underlying uncertainty about both the system and treatment efficacy. Structured Decision Making (SDM) is a tool from the field of decision analysis that uses value-focused thinking to help natural resource agencies make decisions about wildlife disease management that are transparent, inclusive, and defensible, despite these impediments.

Katrina Alger is a Biologist and Decision Analyst at the USGS National Wildlife Health Center where she helps managers apply a decision analysis lens to complex wildlife disease problems. She has worked with states, academic partners, and other federal agencies on a wide variety of issues, including white-nose syndrome in bats, Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease, salamander chytrid fungus, and the impacts of climate change on wildlife health. Katrina has a BA in History and Sociology from Eastern Mennonite University, an MS in Conservation Biology from the State University of New York School of Environmental Science and Forestry, and is currently in the Decision Analysis Certification Program through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Conservation Training Center. She and her partner, Doug, live in Wisconsin with their dog Gremmels and miss hiking in the Shenandoah Mountains.



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