

GENERAL SESSION

WELCOME ADDRESS

Honorable Ross R. Barnett, Governor, State of Mississippi

Mr. Lovell, members of the Southeastern Association of Game and Fish Commissioners, it is a real pleasure to welcome you to Mississippi for your fourteenth annual conference.

I want to thank Bill Simpson for that splendid introduction. He is doing a wonderful job as chairman of the Marine Conservation Commission which regulates our great seafood industry. The Commission has adopted a program which is designed to restore the Mississippi Gulf Coast to the prominence it once enjoyed as the seafood center of the world. We are proud of the good work the Marine Conservation Commission is doing.

Mississippi is proud to be host to your annual conference. We like for people from other states to visit Mississippi. We like for you to see and enjoy our great natural resources; we like for you to see the results of our industrial development program, and we like for you to meet and mingle with us in that atmosphere of Southern hospitality for which Mississippi is so famous.

You have assembled here on the broad expanse of the Gulf Coast, which is rightly called the "Riviera of America." It is a delightful playground which attracts thousands and thousands of tourists a year from all over the United States. I sincerely hope that those of you attending this conference will have an opportunity to enjoy the Gulf Coast facilities and combine some personal pleasure along with the serious discussions which brought you here.

I want to congratulate all of you directors, commissioners or other persons interested in wildlife for planning these conferences. There is no better method of making progress than for people of various areas to get together, exchange ideas, and hear from experts the benefit of their advice and experience. The acceleration of progress depends on pooling of information and development of aggressive programs which carry out the common goal of doing everything possible to reach greater heights of achievement.

I am told that your first annual meeting was in Little Rock in 1946 and that the following year you assembled at St. Petersburg, Florida. With professional wildlife personnel from various states, you held the first technical game and fish sessions.

At the third meeting in Lexington, Kentucky, professional wildlife workers organized a Southeastern Section of the Wildlife Society, which was another forward step. Since that time, the Southeastern Section has arranged for the technical game programs held annually in connection with this meeting.

Since that time a Southern Division of the American Fisheries Society has been organized, which is responsible for the formulation of technical fisheries programs in conjunction with the Southeastern meeting.

A Law Enforcement Section, and an Information and Education Section, also, have been organized. Technical sessions on these subjects are now a part of the Southeastern meeting.

Yes, you have made progress. The Southeastern Association of Game and Fish Commissioners is now recognized as one of the most outstanding conferences dealing with wildlife conservation in the nation.

This conference enables administrators and wildlife technicians to assemble, become acquainted, and discuss mutual problems in improving wildlife programs. Proceedings of your conference, which are published each year, have become highly important as reference material for wildlife workers in the Southeast.

I think it is wonderful, too, that you invite sportsmen to attend these meetings. The sportsmen look to you in your respective fields for the policies which will assure conservation of game and protect game against those who

would violate the law to satisfy their own desires to take a bigger kill than is authorized.

I have enjoyed hunting and fishing ever since I was old enough to hold a pole or carry a gun. I know that our supply of game and fish would be much less if it were not for our conservation programs, the control of seasons, and the control of limits per day.

It has been said you can find out the real character of a man by taking him on a long hunting or fishing trip. You can find out if he appreciates God's great outdoors, whether he has respect for nature and nature's abundance. And most of all, how he can get along with his fellow man. I have known hunters who would argue over whose shot brought down the quail or squirrel. Sometimes I thought it would take a ballistics test, like those available at police departments, to determine which hunter had the right to a disputed bird.

Unfortunately, I have known of hunters who would shoot on the ground into a covey because they couldn't hit the flying targets which furnish the real challenge to dedicated sportsmen.

I am glad we don't have many of these bad hunters any more. I think this is due largely to your own programs of information and education. Hunters know that they must abide by the laws to protect themselves as well as other hunters. Without these laws and regulations, there wouldn't be much hunting in the future.

The presence of wardens offsets many temptations to violate the law. But if they were lax in their enforcement, if they permitted certain hunters to get by with infractions, it would help destroy the entire conservation program.

Sometimes sportsmen are like motorists on the highways. If they don't see a highway patrolman, they exceed the speed limit. Yet by and large, I believe the sportsmen of today—thanks to you and the administration of your programs in your various states—honestly and conscientiously want to give you their full cooperation.

When a property owner posts his land against hunters, you usually will find that some hunter was a little careless. Maybe a stray shot wounded livestock. Maybe a hunter forgot to lock a gate, or maybe he pulled down a section of fence.

It is necessary to constantly remind hunters of their obligations to property owners just as it is important to constantly remind them of fire hazards when they are in the woods.

I am proud of our program in Mississippi and of our game and fish director, Mr. John Camp, who is your host administrator for this conference. I am also proud of our Game and Fish Commission of which Mr. H. C. Strider, of Charleston, is chairman, Ray Cannada, of Edwards, vice-chairman, and all other members of the Game and Fish Commission.

The fact that more people buy licenses every year is a good indication that our conservation program is bearing fruit. Nature couldn't possibly replenish the game as fast as hunters can take it without some kind of restrictions.

This is great work you are doing. I hope that this conference, like others of the past, will be of benefit to all of you, and that all of you will be happy that you came to Mississippi. Thank you.