

for wildlife conservation throughout history. The future promises no "Shangri-La" for these men who form the backbone of the conservation program. Instead, it will require them to accept additional responsibilities in their agency's research and education activities as well as having to cope with more complicated enforcement problems. They will have to meet higher physical and education requirements and complete a rigid training period prior to their field assignments. A merit system will permit those who are capable and conscientious in their profession to receive in-service promotions and, at the same time, eliminate the incompetents or those unwilling to carry their share of the load.

There will be millions more hunters and fishermen appearing each year with more leisure time, faster transportation, and new gadgets which will make increased demands on the available supply of game and fish. Furnishing new and greater supplies of wildlife and suitable places for these animals as well as the people who will demand them will be a challenge to the courage and resourcefulness of administrators, research workers, land managers, education personnel, and enforcement officers alike. Cooperation of all who are engaged in the job of wildlife conservation will be necessary to attain that end.

PUBLIC RELATIONS IN ENFORCEMENT

By Johnie Roy Beam Conservation Officer II

Specifically, public relations is the business of getting along with people, with family and friends, with working associates, with groups of citizens, and with individuals. Sometimes all of us tend to lose our perspective. We forget that the responses we evoke in those around us are almost as important to our successful lives and work as are our own.

Public relations in Conservation Law Enforcement has just as wide a scope as public relations in any other field. But, from the point of view of resource law enforcement personnel, this broad subject can be broken down into four areas:

1. Personal habits
2. Education
3. Communication
4. Cooperation

Just as all of us sometimes do in our everyday lives, it is easy for the game and law enforcement officer to lose his perspective. That is, he forgets that the hunter and fisherman are his "bread and butter", and without them he would be out of work, in fact, he would not be necessary at all. A conservation officer must conduct himself as a public servant. He must regard himself as an active and reliable link between his director and the public he meets in the field.

First, let's discuss personal habits. In order to function effectively, the conservation law enforcement officer must be respected, he must be intelligent, and courteous toward his public while displaying leadership and firmness in carrying out the duties of his position. His chief aim must be to promote public confidence in his Department and respect for the resources of his state and the laws which protect them. In the daily performance of his duties, he should be alert to finding ways of improving this respect; for without it his job would be impossible.

In all supervisory positions, the officer should strive to improve public relations among the men under him. He should receive complaints about his men or their job in a tactful manner, and he should convince the person giving the complaint that the matter will be investigated and appropriate action taken if needed. The way a supervisor receives and handles complaints either makes or breaks him in the eyes of the public and in the eyes of his men. If the public realizes that it can have confidence in the officer, then it will often provide valuable information on violations that are occurring in the area. Without this cooperation, it will be almost impossible to keep things under control. This is one of many reasons why it is

important that an officer always be conscious of his personal habits on and off the job.

Education is closely related to personal habits and is a vital and necessary area of public relations. Conservation law enforcement officers must make the best use of their education; they must study at home if necessary and apply what they learn on the job. They must endeavor to become good public speakers in order to put forth their points in a clear and tactful manner, for in conservation work they will constantly be called upon to present talks to various clubs and organizations. All enforcement agencies need well educated men if they are to fulfill their obligations to the public; for more than anything else, education means the ability to learn, and well qualified conservation law enforcement personnel must continue to learn about their jobs and the people they contact all their working days.

Communication is the most important part of any good public relation program, and good communication can only be accomplished by intelligent and understanding officers. Communication must perform four basic functions if it is to be successful:

1. It must provide the necessary information required to do a job;
2. It must clarify all areas of possible misunderstanding or confusion, (all good communicators are particularly careful not to raise more questions than they answer);
3. It must stimulate creative thinking by suggesting approaches, providing alternatives, offering incentives, and pointing out the value of each particular job;
4. It must satisfy reasonable curiosity because all men have a right and a need to know just what is going on in their organization or field of interest;

Whenever there is communication, there must always be at least two people in on the act; one must write or speak and another must read or listen. The first person, then, must always be mindful of the second if he wishes his communication to be effective.

The basics of effective communication can be broken down into ten steps:

1. Seek to clarify your ideas before you communicate. Get your thinking straight and make your words match your thoughts. Don't make more problems than you solve or ask more questions than you answer.

2. Examine the "true" purpose of each communication. Ask yourself what you are trying to accomplish by what you are going to say, and don't try to accomplish too much with any one communication.

3. Consider the total physical and human setting before you begin communicating. Different people, in different places, with different sets of problems and backgrounds can get entirely different meanings from the very same message.

4. Consult with others, if necessary, while planning your communications. It is both common sense and common courtesy to learn as much as you can of what you are talking about and to whom you are talking before you begin.

5. Be mindful while you communicate of the overtones and undertones, as well as the basic content of your message. Some things you say and do may be obvious and automatic to you, but to the other person they may be unclear or unusual. Try not to let these things creep into your words and spoil your chances for successful communication.

6. Take the opportunity when it arises to convey something of value to the receiver. Point out how what you say and assure that what you are talking about has meaning to the other person and will be of benefit to him.

7. Follow up your communications to assure that your communications are having effect; and if not, change them so that they will have.

8. Communicate for tomorrow as well as today. Both times and people are constantly changing, and the successful communication will provide growing room for tomorrow's ideas.

9. Be sure your actions support your communications. Do what you say; practice what you preach, and more than that, remember that a successful conservation law enforcement officer cannot be a litterbug, a stream polluter, a highway speedster, or a loudmouth.

10. Seek not only to be understood but to understand. It always takes two to

communicate, so be a good listener. There is an old indian proverb: "Don't criticize a man until you have walked a mile in his shoes."

If any one of these things are forgotten or done negatively, it will constitute a barrier to effective communication. If they are all done correctly, then there will be effective communication with the proper person. There will be no breaches in the chain of command, and consequently fewer morale problems. There will be no second-and third-hand passing of the word down the line in hopes that the right man will get it. There will be no confusion. You will make reasonable and obvious requests and require a minimum number of arbitrary orders. Your instructions will be clear and complete. Above all, your life and your work will be easier, more successful, and more satisfying.

There is really only one barrier to effective communications, and that is forgetting that the job takes two people. An intelligent and conscientious officer never forgets the other person.

The conservation enforcement officer should use every means of communication available to him. These include radio, television, weekly and daily newspapers, and most important of all, person to person vocal contact. This means that the officer should be capable of carrying on an understandable conversation with all levels of the public while performing his daily work routine. He must always be able to take time to satisfy questions from the public regardless of how simple they may seem. He must never misinform the public. It is far better for him to say, "I don't know", rather than for him to misquote the law.

Successful public relations in his community require that the officer be as active in youth and other forms of community work as possible. There is no better way to let the public see your best side than to take part in youth baseball or Boy Scout activities. You don't have to be perfect, but conduct yourself as a gentleman at all times.

Radio and TV stations are always eager for hunting and fishing reports. Early morning radio is a good means of maintaining public contact. News of good fishing areas and what the big ones are biting is always easy to listen to and easy for the station to sell. It may seem childish, but the majority of fishermen depend on such reports in planning their fishing trip, and the same things hold true for the hunting season also.

A good public relations program is needed in court. It is beneficial for an officer to let his judges know that he is conducting a good public relations program in his area. Many times a judge will ask the defendant if he knew of the particular law he violated; and if the answer is negative, the judge will advise the defendant of the public relations work being carried on by the officer.

Finally, the officer must cooperate with all other law enforcement agencies and all organizations performing related work. Without this cooperation, good conservation law enforcement is not possible. The conservation officer must work to become a more capable leader in his field, and he will benefit by inter-agency cooperation. He will learn valuable ideas that will be helpful in carrying out his duties and providing more and better resource protection for his public. In Alabama, I think we have the best cooperation of all law enforcement agencies in the nation.