

# **The International Association: Its Importance to the Fish and Wildlife Resource Worker**

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It is good once more to attend and participate in the Southeastern Conference. The opportunity is much appreciated. And it gives me this chance to talk with you about the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, which I have the privilege of representing.

The International Association is not a household word. It rarely makes the news. It is not even well known to rank and file fish and wildlife workers. So I would like to take this opportunity to explain what the Association is, what it does, how it works, and why it is important to the resource and to you personally as professional fish and wildlife workers. Its activities touch each of you in ways you may not even be aware of.

Let me begin by describing the structure of the Association and then cite some examples of its work.

The Association is no newcomer, no "Johnny come lately," to the environmental movement. Since its founding in 1902, its objectives have been to encourage sound, rational, and professional fish and wildlife management; to promote a public understanding of the need for such management; to promote cooperative relationships among agencies and organizations; and to encourage workable international arrangements for the benefit of fish and wildlife resources. In pursuit of these objectives, it has consistently opposed emotional and political approaches and defended rational, professional management and the use of essential management tools.

All 50 state fish and wildlife agencies are members; 5 U.S. federal agencies; Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and the District of Columbia; 8 Canadian provinces and the Canadian Wildlife Service; the Direccion General de la Flora y Fauna Silvestre of Mexico; and the Republic of China as a cooperator. There are 13 affiliates which include such organizations as the North American Association of Hunter Safety Coordinators, the Association of State Planners, and others; and 5 contributing members which include the Wildlife Legislative Fund of America, the Woodstream Corporation and others. There are also 313 individual Associate Members.

The Association is governed by its officers and an executive committee, all

elected from the ranks of the state, federal, and provincial members. The officers are responsible for providing leadership and direction. The executive committee establishes policy and priorities. Each of the regional association presidents, as well as Canada and Mexico, are ex officio members of the executive committee. There is a sound system for nominating and electing members to office. For example, it takes a minimum of 6 years for a member to pass through the chairs from a member of the executive committee to its chairman, and finally to first and second vice president and president, assuming he is re-nominated and re-elected each year. It guarantees stability and continuity, and requires a demonstrated record of performance. Incidentally, the Southeast is always well represented. Gary Myers is president, Robert Brantly, second vice president. Jim Timmerman, Charles Kelley, Chester Phelps, and Larry Gale are past presidents; Lon Strong and Steve Wilson are on the executive committee and Chester Phelps is secretary-treasurer. The four Regional Associations play a key role in the work of the International.

The Association's staff work is done by its committees. Incidentally, there are 36 committees with representation from 70 governmental members and 59 cooperating organizations with a total of 701 members. Obviously, there is very active participation on the part of the membership and cooperators through the committees which are the real backbone of the Association and responsible for the development of Association positions and policies.

At both the spring meeting in March in connection with the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference and the Association's annual convention in September, the committees meet and develop recommendations which are passed on by either the executive committee or the business meeting. There is also a winter meeting, usually in December in Washington, at which time the legislative and executive committees meet to develop program and legislative priorities for the year ahead.

The Association maintains a Washington office which was first established in 1972. The Washington office is the "nerve center" of the Association, where information is received and dispensed; where coordination of the decisions and actions is achieved; where positions and policies developed by committees and the executive body are translated into actions; where the policies, directions, and philosophical goals of the elected leadership are conveyed and communicated to the Executive and Legislative branches of the government, to cooperators, and to the membership; and, where the Association's budget and fiscal policies are developed. It is also where we pay the bills, answer letters, and keep the files. We are housed in offices provided by the National Wildlife Federation.

No organization ever accomplishes anything worthwhile working alone. It takes constant liaison, cooperation, and good working relationships with other organizations having similar objectives. We meet and work continuously with a number of organizations. We also meet and sometimes cooperate with organizations having different objectives and philosophies than ours. It is sometimes necessary to join in cooperative efforts with some very strange bedfellows indeed, but this is the way the system works. Suffice it to say that success requires daily liaison and good work-

ing relationships not only with other conservation groups but with the members of Congress and their staffs; as well as agency heads and their staffs in the Executive Branch.

Let me cite a few examples of legislative, legal and international activities which are personally and professionally important to the individual worker.

. . . Legislation provides the authority—and funding—for all of the work we all do. The Association has been instrumental in the passage of very important, fundamental legislation, some of which we now take for granted. When I say instrumental, I don't mean just supportive. Rather, the Association had a strong hand in the development, the language, and in mustering the necessary support for passage. Some of these include the Pittman-Robertson Act, the Dingell-Johnson Act, the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and the Sikes Act; and, more recently, the Wallop-Breaux expansion of sport fishing and recreational boating activities, which will increase funds to at least \$125 million annually, about triple the amount available under the present Dingell-Johnson program. And, we have had a strong role in the 1985 Farm Bill which will impact virtually all privately-owned agricultural lands in the United States in a very positive way. With its conservation reserve and its sodbuster and swampbuster provisions, it will help to reduce serious soil erosion; help prevent the plowing of marginal lands; help protect wetlands; and give fish and wildlife interests a stronger voice in the implementation of agricultural policy. Obviously these legislative landmarks not only provide the authority for the work in which you are engaged; they make money available to pay the salaries of a good number of state employees.

It is also important to block or amend undesirable legislation. The Association has successfully opposed anti-trapping legislation, anti-hunting, and protectionist legislation in the many forms that it takes, and bills which would have diverted federal aid funds to handgun victims.

. . . Support of the federal budget helps to keep the federal agencies—the Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Soil Conservation Service, and of special importance in this area, the Tennessee Valley Authority—adequately funded to carry out basic missions. The federal budgets also carry the important grants in aid funds so important to the states. The Association is actively involved in the federal budget process and, with the help of others, was successful in restoring over \$78 million in grants in aid funds in Fiscal 1985 budgets.

. . . During the past 16 years, the Association has engaged in over 40 legal actions and we take justifiable pride in the win record:

—A suit brought by Friends of Animals in 1978 sought to halt virtually all federal aid PR projects. The Association's involvement was key to the defeat of that move and in the process helped protect not only the federal aid projects but all of the project workers over the Nation as a whole. It was a close call. Had Friends of Animals succeeded, it would have terminated, for an indefinite period, over \$62 million

annually in projects and innumerable state jobs and interrupted program continuity. At the present time, available money exceeds \$100 million.

—Successful defense in the Bobcat case, brought by Defenders of Wildlife, served to protect state authority in the management of resident species; and, with subsequent amendments to the Endangered Species Act, assured that sound and acceptable wildlife management surveys and investigations would be legally acceptable. It preserved the integrity of our methodology. Contrary to popular belief, this was not just a case about Bobcats but a case about state responsibility and authority to manage any species and the kind of data essential for their management.

—In 1985 the Association entered and won a Montana case, going all the way to the Supreme Court, on behalf of state authority to discriminate against non-resident hunters in hunting license fees. Obviously this case had implications for all states.

—The Black Duck case brought by the Humane Society of the United States would have halted the rational management of that species had it not been for International Association intervention.

—Several years ago the Association pitched in to support Florida in an action to protect the State's authority to conduct an Everglades deer hunt.

—We are currently involved in legal action brought by the Humane Society of the United States to halt hunting on all National Wildlife Refuges; I think we will be successful. There are many, many others.

I want to stress that it is not just the win record that is all important. One of the important aspects of legal actions is the effect of the court decisions in interpreting legislation. These provide the building blocks for policies, regulations and future legislative actions. Our legal work is handled by Legal Counsel Paul Lenzini and associates, members of a very prominent Washington law firm.

. . . Since its inception the Association has been active in international affairs, including treaties, conventions, and international agreements. This is far more important than it may seem because a treaty becomes the law of the land and always preempts some Federal responsibilities. It is important that state authority is not bargained away.

—The Association had a hand in development of the 1916 Migratory Bird Treaty with Canada and in the Migratory Bird Treaty Act which provides for its implementation. Since 1980, we have been involved in the Protocol to Amend the 1916 Treaty Act. With others, the Association has acted to prevent Senate ratification until the Protocol contains sufficient provisions to protect the resource. The Association has had representation through Jack Grieb and Dick Yancey in working with the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Canadians in the development of a North American Waterfowl Management Plan.

—We are currently supporting the so-called RAMSAR Convention, which would recognize wetlands of international significance.

—We have been working actively with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, primarily to maintain the integrity of the purposes of that

Convention without loss of state or U.S. federal authority to manage species covered by the Convention.

—This Association had representation at the CITES meetings in Switzerland, Puerto Rico, Botswana, and Argentina. We were also represented at the RAMSAR Convention meeting in the Netherlands and at the IUCN meeting in New Zealand; also the “Bonn Convention” in West Germany in 1979.

—The Association was and is very active in opposition to the “Bonn Convention,” the Convention on Migratory Species, which would preempt both state and federal authority in favor of international control. As a consequence, the United States has not become a signatory. The parties to that convention are meeting again this month in Bonn. Past President C.D. Besadny is on the U.S. delegation.

—We are actively assisting with the U.S.-Mexico Cooperative Project by administering the funds for that project.

—And, did you know that this Association was the initiator and architect for the present Flyway Management Council system of developing waterfowl regulations?

President Gary Myers summed up the impact of the Association very well in a message in the October 1985 Newsletter. He said in part:

“I have only been involved in activities of the International for about seven or eight years. During that period of time, I have been pleased with our accomplishments, with our involvement in various issues, the professional way our Association conducts business, and with our legal victories. I have also been impressed with the “worth” of our Association.

For example, Tennessee probably paid less than \$50,000 in dues to the Association during this period. In one year, Tennessee received \$60,000 for one of our wildlife programs strictly as a result of the International’s efforts. The International also played a key role in the D-J expansion effort, which will eventually provide Tennessee with at least \$1 million more a year for fisheries work. I am certain that the International influenced the expansion of several federal agency budgets during these years, which impacted fish and wildlife programs in Tennessee. One federal budget expansion resulted in a \$7 million wetlands purchase in the Volunteer State. I can’t categorically credit the Association with this acquisition; however, I don’t believe the acquisition would have happened without the friends Tennessee made doing work for the International. Tennessee also received valuable legal advice from Paul Lenzini on at least two federal lawsuits. The bottom line is that Tennessee’s contribution of less than \$50,000 to the International has resulted in their receiving several million dollars for wildlife programs. If similar results can be obtained with the next \$50,000 Tennessee gives the International, I’ll send ‘em the money now.”

Now let me next describe the uniqueness of the International Association. The Association is composed of governmental agencies who have a trust responsibility for managing fish and wildlife resources. They represent the will of their legislators and are representatives of their governors. The Association represents governments. These member agencies employ about 90% of the fish and wildlife expertise in this nation. The Association has, therefore, through its members—the people actually doing the work, the best professional expertise available on any fish and wildlife

subject. We have a depth of professional capability not available to any other conservation organization. These people, the directors and their staffs, are involved in the development of Association positions and frequently come to Washington to testify in legal actions, to testify before Congressional committees, and to meet with federal officials.

And of key importance, the directors of the state agencies are in touch with their Governors and their Congressional delegations. Both look to the state agencies for guidance. Through these contacts the state directors are in touch with the entire national political structure. And those contacts are used constantly in furtherance of the Association's positions and objectives.

It is this combination of legal responsibility, in-depth, professional expertise and working contacts with the elected political leaders of the nation that sets the Association apart from the membership organizations or the smaller organizations which have an interest of one sort or another in fish and wildlife resources. It is this combination which gives it unique strength and influence.

The Association's success is measured by its influence on the future course of events. This is our reason for existence: to influence, in a very positive way, the future management of fish and wildlife resources. This requires confidence, respect and integrity. I think we have a very enviable track record.

A final thought: quite often we burden you by asking for information. Please be assured that we do so only as we need it and when it will serve a very useful purpose.

I have utilized my time by describing an organization—your organization; how it functions and how it affects you and your work. I have not mentioned the mounting resource pressures that challenge the individual state workers, the state and federal agencies and the Association as a whole. I think these are well understood and require no elaboration.

There will be increased need for a very effective Association. It too must change to meet new challenges. There will be changes. President Gary Myers has asked a committee of very seasoned, experienced members of the Association to review what that future course should be and to make recommendations next March. I don't know what these will be, but I have confidence that they will be sound; that they will move us in a necessary direction; and I know too that they will require the support of all of the members of the Association.

Thank you.