

CHALLENGES TO WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

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I sincerely appreciate the Southeastern Association making it possible for me to attend and participate in this meeting; to learn more of your thinking, problems, and positions; and to get better acquainted with the state directors and your staffs. This enables us in Washington to more accurately reflect your views and represent your needs in the legislative and executive arenas. And, of course, it is most enjoyable to sit in on your committee sessions and join in the social activities.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss challenges to wildlife management. It is most appropriate because we are indeed at a crossroad in the resource movement. Most certainly we are faced with changes and challenges. How well we assess the situation and plan now for the future will determine how successfully we manage fish and wildlife resources for many years ahead.

First, I am pleased to report that the International Association and its members have a good rapport and working relationship with various elements of this Administration, with the Congress and with other organizations having similar interests. It is especially gratifying to note that professionals have been selected for the leadership posts in both the National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. And as an aside, the strong, persistent efforts of our members and friends played a major role in those selections.

In taking advantage of our opportunities and in accepting challenge, we must always bear in mind that the interests of the Association and its members and the needs of the resources go beyond 4 years or the next or the 4 years after that. To be effective, to maintain our credibility and to increase our respect and influence over the long haul, we must pursue a thoughtful, determined and consistent position, regardless of which administration may be in power or which party may have the upper hand. This is the reputation and image that I believe we must project as individuals, as agencies and as an Association; and, it must be clearly recognizable to other organizations, to the executive branch and to the Congress now and in the future.

During the past decade working resource managers have been much concerned by increasing preservationist movements; by anti-hunting and anti-management attitudes; and by increasing federalism. While the proponents of these movements are now receiving less attention, they are far from inactive and only await the opportunity to renew their efforts.

But now we are faced with new challenges, new problems and as a matter of fact, new opportunities — and, of an entirely different kind. With an obvious change in the public attitude, with a new Administration, with a restructuring and shifting of power within the Congress, with realignment of the conservation and environmental organizations, changes are now being wrought that will place increased responsibilities upon the state and federal agencies as well as upon the Regional and International Associations. To a large extent, we have been in a defensive position for a number of years. In my judgement, we are now moving

into a period of positive action, increased responsibility, and constructive influence and we must pursue these opportunities with aggressiveness. At the same time, we face some severe and acute problems.

First, of course, we must accurately assess the situation if we are to meet the challenges and chart a realistic course with both short and long term benefits. I wonder how well we really understand the profound nature of the changes that are taking place and others we may expect. There is a simplistic inclination to associate these with the new Administration and its personalities and consider it to be temporary. We are experiencing a change in the American mind — a political, social and economic revolution in American thought and philosophy. The election was only one evidence of that change. So, we must sense the American mind and the changes it might generate. Let me suggest a number of assumptions which I believe are valid as a basis for future plans:

. . . There is no lessening of public concern about a healthy environment. That concern, however, has become more sophisticated and mature. The public disenchantment is not with the effort to insure a healthy environment but with the extremist, zealot points of view. There is increased recognition of the need for resource development and use, but no lessening in basic environmental concerns.

. . . While the public and members of this Association may believe that environmentalism, particularly protectionism and preservationism, has gone too far, the public and certainly no member of this Association wishes to see any of the basic conservation gains of the last several decades lost or eroded.

. . . The election and subsequent events suggests that the public is concerned with a government grown too large, with over-regulation, with increasing federalism and with federal spending. This is not to say, however, that the public does not expect a strong federal government and a continuing federal overview to assure that environmental concerns receive adequate attention and responsible action.

. . . It would be a mistake to associate this period of state and federal budget tightening exclusively with this Administration or to assume that it is temporary. This Nation has been approaching the limits of public taxation and spending for some time and we may expect that the current initiatives to reduce public spending will continue for a long time into the future. There will be increased competition for the available tax dollars and decreased opportunities to apply various kinds of tax or revenue increasing measures.

. . . The fish and wildlife and other resource management agencies are going to be operating on fewer dollars for all of the foreseeable future.

. . . There will be long range impacts on educational institutions and employment opportunities.

. . . The public disenchantment with increasing federalism is being reflected, in part, in a return of authority and responsibility to state and local governments. This movement also will continue into the future.

. . . Increasing U.S. demands for food, fiber and energy plus the increasing use of food as a diplomatic tool and as a trade off for energy will increase competition among land uses and pose increasing threats to fish and wildlife habitats.

. . . Most resource managers welcome a more balanced approach to management, but there is the very real danger that as the pendulum swings back it will go too far and that exploitation may well be the result.

Along with these basic assumptions I believe that there are a number of specific potential dangers against which we must guard to insure:

- . . . that the needed regulatory reform does not become deregulation
- . . . that the hoped for "balanced use" does not translate into exploitation
- . . . that needed legislative improvement does not result in erosion of basic conservation statutes

- . . . that needed budget economies do not emasculate the resource agencies.

If these are basic and valid assumptions and specific danger points, I believe that they suggest at least the direction we should pursue. More importantly, they suggest that agency and program survival and successful fish and wildlife resources management will require that we prepare for change.

First, and perhaps most importantly, the states must be able to accept and discharge the responsibilities and authorities which are being returned to them by the federal government. We have worked long and hard for a recognition of state authority and state responsibility. With that recognition, however, comes the reality of fully discharging the increased responsibilities. Given 50 states, not all are equally prepared to accept increased responsibility which requires increased capability, increased funding and in some cases new legislation and more stringent state regulations. This transfer of responsibility is coming faster and in different ways than some had anticipated. Some are made for philosophical reasons. But most, to the present time, are a result of federal budget reductions. And this is causing some immediate problems and hardships through loss of programs and loss of personnel.

These federal reductions will have a tremendous impact upon cooperative as well as purely state programs. For example, as part of the Administration 12% reduction in the FY 82 budget, the Fish and Wildlife Service proposes the closure of 31 hatcheries, termination of the national reservoir research program, termination of cooperative studies on habitat classification, termination of the wildlife disease function, and other reductions. This is in addition to a virtual wipe out of grants-in-aid funds, other than PR and DJ.

It may be that some of these need to be trimmed. And, some should probably be transferred to the states. But, the timing is such that there is little opportunity for most states to make the necessary budget adjustments or seek new sources of state funding.

There are going to be severe interim problems.

But I believe there are ways and means of accomodating to these changes without long range hardship. It is, in fact, imperative unless we wish to see the flow of power reverse itself, for it is axiomatic that when states fail in a fundamental responsibility, federal intervention is inevitable, and in fact, demanded by the public. And, in our zeal for a recognition of state authority, we must recognize that the success of our form of government and the success of sound resource management depends upon a working partnership of a strong federal government and strong state governments.

Economy measures, belt tightening, reordering of priorities, budget cutting are all self-evident and require no elaboration on my part. And, we must eliminate inter and intra agency duplication of effort. Obviously the states must seek additional funding. It is encouraging that 13 states now have some form of tax check off system to generate new revenue. There are, however, other measures

which can, in the long range, reduce the financial burden upon fish and wildlife administrations while increasing their effectiveness in dealing with fish and wildlife resource concerns.

First, it is imperative that we work more closely and more effectively with others who establish, administer and implement land and water use policies. We have been spending a substantial portion of our energies in the defense of single species or groups of species or in setting aside parcels of land having particular fish and wildlife values. Obviously, these activities are necessary but we must expend a greater portion of our energy in working with those who influence total land use and hence determine the future for *all* fish and wildlife habitats.

Too often, we as wildlifers have alienated those who either own, control or influence policies on land, whether public or private. We tend to view "agriculture" as the abstract enemy of wildlife and its habitat in spite of the fact that most of our wildlife is both produced and harvested on the 76% of the land in the lower 48 which is in private ownership. We need to be working more closely with the Soil Conservation Service and with the farm and ranch organizations, the Farm Bureau, the Grange, the National Wool Growers Association, the National Cattlemen's Association and others.

I think the mature philosophy, and in my judgement the only viable approach, in the days ahead is to develop a philosophy of management whereby the production of fish and wildlife and their harvest are harmonious with man's other requirements and needs and the needs of society generally. This means, of course, that we must recognize other needs and make realistic accommodations when necessary. I do not mean that we should abdicate our position as fish and wildlife advocates. Rather, we must work more realistically with others. *We can no longer go it alone.*

I do not mean that we should just be working more closely with our co-workers in other agencies and with our counterparts in other organizations. What I am suggesting is that we work together as policies and legislation are developed at both the state and federal levels to assure that it incorporates sound resource management practices, using "resources" in the broadest sense of the word. Too often the state legislatures and the national Congress hear separately from the wildlife interests, the timber interests, the grazing interests, the mining interests and a host of others. It is rare indeed when these come together in advance of the hearings and in advance of the drafting of policy and legislation and attempt to hammer out the differences. But when it does happen — when the interests get together and appear before the Congress and indicate they jointly support a measure, it has been not only surprising to the members of the Congress, but surprisingly effective in achieving the desired results.

In short, we must work with others for good, sound resource management with full consideration for the well being of fish and wildlife resources in *all* legislation and in *all* policy decisions both state and federal.

Much the same is true of working with other organizations. We talk too much to ourselves. We need to be working actively with the major organizations which have impacts upon resource uses in each state whether these are the wool growers, the oystermen, the loggers, the farmers or the Chambers of Commerce. Too often the agency employee believes this to be a responsibility exclusively of the director or his deputy or of the Association in Washington. It is important for every employee

to maintain contact with his or her counterpart. This is part of the job. It is just as essential to management as making a big game census, a range analysis or a creel census.

Further, I believe the responsibility for maintaining contacts and communications should be carefully planned and assigned. Effective relationships are not developed casually, at chance meetings or through infrequent visits. Rather, they are developed by careful planning, periodic visits and consultations on matters of mutual interests; in rendering assistance and working together where interests converge; and, in making a point of attempting to resolve differences on issues before they become matters of public and legislative concern.

Fish and wildlife resources are profoundly affected by legislation and court actions. Clearly, the successful application of sound management depends upon favorable legislation. The states must become more directly and actively involved in legislation at both the state and federal levels. Most, of course, are involved at the state level, but I wonder how often this involvement is limited to the period when the legislature is in session as opposed to a planned program for keeping state legislators informed thoroughly and continuously of fish and wildlife programs.

And, while state activity, interest and involvement in national legislation have been increasing, too few state agencies are keeping their congressional delegation fully informed or in keeping themselves posted, relying on the International Association or other national organizations to act as the catalysts.

For example how many of our workers and administrators are familiar with the Farm Bill or the RCP or RPA processes, all of which will have tremendous impact upon fish and wildlife habitats. Quite obviously this is all a major function of the Association and of other Washington organizations. However, there is no substitute for a personal working relationship between a state fish and wildlife agency and the staff members of the Congressional Delegation.

A number of the states have now assigned legislative liaison responsibility to a single person, some to monitor state legislation, others to monitor federal legislation and work with their Congressional Delegation and the Association's office. This Association can monitor proposed Federal legislation affecting fish and wildlife programs in the states. It can serve as a catalyst and stimulate or orchestrate an Association position and present this position at a congressional hearing. What the Congressman wants to know, however, is what the people at home think? What does his own state fish and wildlife agency believe? What do the citizens think? Without exception, it has been our experience that it is the state witnesses, the state expertise, the people with the knowledge of the programs on the ground that have been most persuasive in testifying before the Congress and it has been the communications from the states encouraging the passage or defeat of a measure that have been most effective.

And, as Ted Clark's statement suggested, if ever there is need for education, that need is now.

There is also a changing role for the International and Regional Associations of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, as President Fullerton has suggested. In addition to our traditional roles, the Associations need to help the states in preparing to accept new responsibilities. This really is a time for mutual assistance and collective action.

We are moving into a period of profound change, fueled by a more moderately minded public, changing economic and social attitudes and policies, increased demands for food, fiber and energy. These changes will bring problems, some very severe. But they also offer opportunities and challenges and an exciting time in resource management history. They will force us to trim and sharpen our programs and approaches and to assess what we are doing. They will require our best judgement, discipline and firm determination. They will severely test our administrative and management abilities and legislative skills. Most importantly, they will force us to cooperate and work together. This may be the single most important challenge of the times ahead.