

GENERAL SESSION

SUMMARY OF THE FIRST SOUTHEASTERN VITAL STATISTICS SURVEY

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The Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies includes nearly all of the governmental forms found in such agencies. Of the 16 member states, 11 are separate or independent agencies; 4 are divisions of a department of natural resources; and 1 is included in a department of conservation. Six are provided for by their state's constitution, and 10 by statutory law.

All but 1 of the agencies is governed by an unpaid board of commissioners, with from 4 to 15 members. The exception agency is governed by a single, paid commissioner.

All member agencies are responsible for inland fish and wildlife. Five have coastal fisheries responsibilities. Nine administer their state's boating program, and 6 have responsibility for other recreational activities.

One characteristic common to all the agencies is the large area covered by a relatively small staff. With the ever-increasing population growth in the South, the number of people we serve is expanding without a corresponding increase in agency growth. Of these people, the percent who hunt, by state, varies from a low of 2.77 percent to a high of 17.65 percent, providing a regional average of 9.5 percent. The percent that fish varies from a low of 3.2 percent to a high of 29.63 percent, with a regional average of 13.95 percent.

Funding for fish and wildlife work in the Southeast comes from a variety of sources. All but one state receives the revenue from the sale of licenses. Combined with permit fees and Federal Aid, these sources provide the bulk of agency revenue. Nine states also receive legislative appropriations from state general revenue funds.

Unique in the Southeast are several sources which deserve mention. Mineral sales provide significant revenue to Louisiana, Texas and Oklahoma. Cigarette taxes provide Texas with over \$16 million. The Missouri Conservation Sales Tax brings in over \$30 million and severance taxes provide nearly \$2.5 million for Louisiana. The total annual revenue reported for all states was \$270,616,411.

Considering only consumptive users, Southeastern Fish and Wildlife Agencies spent an average of \$30 on each of their constituents. This statistic must be used with care, however, as it does not consider that many of the agencies are responsible for more than fish and wildlife, and that wildlife resources are of value to all citizens.

All of these funding sources provide a wide range of agency budgets in the Southeast, from a low of \$2.5 million to a high of \$59.8 million, with the average being \$16.9 million. The total of all Southeastern agency budgets is \$270,616,411. The average of the states' expenditures, by major activity, was administration, 13.57 percent; law enforcement, 26.81 percent; wildlife management, 15.75 percent; fisheries management, 12.55 percent; for a total of 69 percent. The remaining 31 percent was expended for hunter safety, information and education, land acquisition and other agency programs.

The largest single expense item among all the states was for salaries. The percentage of the budgets paid for salaries varied as much as the total budgets, from a low of 32 percent to a high of 80 percent, with an average of 53 percent. The number of professional personnel in the states ranged from a low of 72 to a high of 638, with an average of 336.

Law enforcement personnel number from a low of 50 to a high of 244, with a region-wide total of 2,420 officers. The average Southeastern state has a force of 147 officers who must deal with an average of 37,086 people each. This number varies from 101,715 to 14,000 people per officer.

Time expended on wildlife enforcement ranged from 65 percent to 30 percent, with the average being 48.4 percent. Fisheries enforcement took an average of 30.2 percent of officer time, with a range of 40 percent to 15.5 percent. Enforcement authority also varies among the states. Eight states are empowered to enforce all state laws. Excluding these, 6 are empowered to enforce boating laws; 7 enforce litter laws; and 4 enforce pollution laws.

Officers checked an average of 231,728 users per state annually. This resulted in an average of 92 arrests per officer per year, or 11,988 arrests annually in the average Southeastern state. The officers in the Southeast achieved a conviction rate of 82.5 percent, with a range of 97 percent to 51 percent. It is interesting to note also that 5 of the 16 states have some type of reward system for reporting violations.

To summarize the license structure of all the Southeastern states, or even compare them, is impossible. There are 83 types of resident licenses, 64 types of non-resident licenses, and 61 various permits and miscellaneous licenses. While there is little common ground in the Southeast relative to the cost of fishing licenses, one commonality is a general fishing-only license sold in 14 of the states. This license ranges in cost from \$2 to \$7.50 and averages \$5.20. Ten states offer a trout license or stamp. These can be classified resident, non-resident and common, where the same stamp is good for both residents and visitors. Among all states that require a trout license, the average cost to residents is \$3.30, with a range of \$2.25 to \$4.50. Non-resident trout costs range from \$3 to \$10.50, and averages \$5.14. Non-resident annual fishing license costs are more variable than resident costs. The range is \$6 to \$20, with the average cost being \$11.25. For short-term visitors, there are a variety of term licenses, including a "trip" license, 3-day, 5-day, 7-day, 10-day, 14-day and a 15-day license.

There is no more common ground among the hunting license structure than the fishing license. For resident hunters, 13 states offer a hunting-only license selling at an average of \$6.40 and ranging from \$4.25 to \$11. Nine states require a big game license of some kind, averaging \$5.93 and ranging from \$3.25 to \$10.50. Some states break this down even further to specific species of big game. Archery licenses are required in 8 states, with an average cost to the hunter of \$4.59. Combination hunting and fishing licenses are offered for residents in 12 states. The combination averages \$10.20 and ranges from \$7.25 to \$17. Sportsmen's licenses are available in 3 states. Two of the states charge \$25 and the third charges \$30.30. Non-resident hunters pay an average of \$31.83 for their privilege, with a range of \$10.50 to \$55. Two states offer a combination hunting and fishing license to non-residents. For the hunting visitor, short-term licenses are also available. They cover periods of 3, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10 days. The average non-resident big game license in the Southeast costs \$31.65, with a range of from \$5.50 to \$100.75. Resident trappers spend an average of \$6.86 on licenses, with a range of \$1.25 to \$10. Non-resident trappers pay from \$15.30 to \$200, and average \$110.10.

Fisheries management work in the Southeast is a mixture of many divergent programs, characterized by striking similarities as well as differences. Southeastern states stock 23 different species of fish. The most commonly stocked is largemouth bass, with 15 of the member states stocking this species. Fourteen states stock striped bass, catfish, and sunfish. Thirteen stock trout and 10 stock smallmouth bass. Four of the states have separate pollution abatement programs, usually with small staffs.

Regulation of the fishery in the Southeast is also extremely divergent, perhaps signifying varying philosophies. In 7 questions regarding creel, size and other limits, the 16 states required 45 footnotes to inadequately describe their regulations. Member agencies of the

Southeastern have control or ownership of 2,278,232 acres of water, most through cooperative agreements with governmental agencies, although much is in fee title ownership.

Commercial fishing restrictions vary as much as sport fishing. The amount of water open to commercial operators varies from 100 percent in some states to as little as 5 percent in certain coastal waters of others. Commercial fishing is generally permitted more in the coastal zones than in inland waters. Some states have gear restrictions limiting certain commercial techniques, while allowing others virtually statewide.

The wildlife management portion of the survey questioned the status of 23 game species with regard to hunter popularity. Of the big game species, the white-tailed deer is, of course, the most popular with a reported total harvest in the Southeast of 1,119,500. Contrary to the variation in the white-tailed populations in the Southeast, there is a consistently high number of deer hunters in each state. Turkeys and turkey hunters have a less surprising trend, with the number of hunters being fairly consistent with the level of the turkey population. Of the most popular small game animals, squirrels were the most heavily hunted, followed by rabbits and doves. Quail were fourth on the list. The 2 most-sought-after furbearers in the Southeast are the raccoon and the muskrat. In 10 states, the raccoon is most popular; in 5, the muskrat; and in 1, the nutria is by far the most harvested.

The type and intensity of wildlife management varies widely between the states. Wildlife stocking is still fairly common, mainly for game species. The most commonly stocked species are turkey, stocked by 13 states; and deer, stocked by 8 states. One or more species of upland small game are stocked by 7 states and 3 states stock geese and/or pheasants.

In most of the Southeast, trends in wildlife populations are not surprising. Ten states show increasing deer populations each year and 6 show white-tailed deer stable. Small game populations are stable or decreasing. Waterfowl numbers tend to reflect the previous year's breeding success.

Five of the states are working with computer modeling to manage their deer herds, and 1 determines its harvest directly from the model. Other methods of determining deer harvest include compulsory tagging, compulsory checking stations and mail surveys. Twelve states have on-going university research contracts relative to fisheries, wildlife, non-game and endangered species, totaling \$1,338,424.

There are over 24 million acres of public hunting land in the 16 member states. Most of this land is provided through agreements with government agencies or private industry, although some 1.44 million acres are owned by the states. Eight of the states have a hunting fee established on some or all of this land. Four have use fees for camping, 3 for fishing, and 1 for wildlife observation.

Information and education is also handled in a diverse manner in the Southeast. One of the more popular methods is through the use of an agency magazine. Five such magazines are published monthly, 5 bimonthly, and 2 quarterly. Of these 12, only 1 uses commercial advertising. Generally, the circulation of these publications is growing. The magazine staffs are made up in several ways, ranging from no full-time personnel to 10, and from no part-time personnel to 11. The rule seems to be either a small full-time staff or a medium-sized part-time staff.

Standard environmental courses are offered by 3 states. These range from teacher short courses to volunteer programs to graded teaching aides provided directly to teachers.

Seven states are producing motion pictures with about 11.5 produced in the region each year. Six states have regular television programs. Half are broadcast on education channels and half on commercial stations. Ten states are involved in television spot productions with over 23 public service announcements produced each year.

All states in the Association have a hunter education program. The length of these courses ranges from 6 to 12 hours with an average of 8. The average number of graduates per state annually is 12,800 with a range of 3,400 to 32,000.

I believe we are all working for the management and preservation of fish and wildlife for future generations. Remember, this is the first survey and hopefully will be repeated annually for years to come. We all recognize this first survey contained some inaccuracies, some omissions, and in other ways did not provide all of the information we would like to have. It is our intent to refine the survey, its compilation and presentation in order to provide a broad array of information regarding fish and wildlife management in the Southeast.

Towards this end, we need your help. The information it contains is no better than that which is provided by the states. If you are called on to participate in the survey, please provide complete and accurate information. Additionally, we solicit your suggestions for improvement, both in content and form of presentation.