

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION SESSION

LOW-COST CONSERVATION FILMS FOR TELEVISION

By BOB DAHNE

(No paper available for printing)

Copies of the specialized paper and information available from Information and Education Division, Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, Tallahassee, Florida upon request.

ESSENTIALS OF AN EFFECTIVE CONSERVATION COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAM

By J. J. SHOMON

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Twenty years of close association with state and federal natural resources agencies has convinced me that much of our conservation information-education work can stand scrutiny.

Instead of coming to these conferences with pats on the back over what a marvelous job we're doing, may I suggest we occasionally gird ourselves and give our programs the real critical look. We might ask ourselves, critically: *What are we trying to accomplish in our information-education effort? What are we doing, and where are we heading?*

If we are honest—and we should be—and give these questions serious thought, then there is much that we can learn, much that we can profit thereby.

Not so long ago a well-known and accomplished administrator made this courageous statement: "Attendant to any terminology having to do with our natural resources—soil, water, minerals, timber and wildlife—it can be said with considerable factual proof that there has been a staggering amount of mismanagement, inexcusable waste and general manhandling of our resources. I say this in spite of any testimonials that may be forthcoming to the contrary."

I do not know, of course, what specifics Mr. Swift had in mind, and it does not matter. The important thing is that, generally speaking, we are not doing as good a conservation job as we are capable of doing. The criticism is not against any one state, federal agency or group. It is a general criticism and it can be supported by factual proof. Anyone who believes differently need only see for himself—need only examine present-day operations, as I have tried to do recently on my 33,000-mile study of conservation agencies, ministries, bureaus, departments, commissions, and private companies throughout the continent, a survey which took me into 24 states, most of the provinces of Canada, and the territory of Alaska. If there was anything that was made plain on this trip, it was this: That while conservationists are making headway everywhere, much improvement in management and communications can yet be done. By communications I refer to information-education processes and not equipment. The hour is short. There is no time for vacillation. If we are to win the conservation battle of our time, we've got to redirect and realign our programs in the direction of more worthy programs—programs possessed of mature judgment, humbleness, and dedicated conservation ideals.

Before I go on further, let me make clear that I am casting no aspersions on the good conservation work that is being or that has been done. God forbid. There is too little praise of good programs and conscientious effort, as it is. I only say we have not had enough of it. We must have more. We must not be satisfied with our performance but get on with the big job that still remains to be done.

In too many of the states and areas I have visited, it is clearly evident that we are not doing as good a job as we're capable of doing, and the boys admit