

GAME MANAGEMENT SESSION

PROGRESS IN PRESERVATION OF DELTA HARDWOODS

By
TRUSTEN H. HOLDER
Wildlife Consultant

ARKANSAS PLANNING COMMISSION

ABSTRACT

The Arkansas Planning Commission, in cooperation with the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, has completed a study of the loss of wetlands and woodlands in Eastern Arkansas. Although the detailed study was limited to the Arkansas portion of the Mississippi River Delta Region, essentially the same conditions prevail in the Delta portions of five other states and the recommendations to alleviate the problem are applicable Regionwide.

Shortly after the study got underway, it was recognized that the destruction of wetlands, woodlands and other environmental qualities in the Delta was precipitating losses which extend far beyond what is generally believed to be the limits of conservation interests.

In the fall of 1969, Governor Winthrop Rockefeller directed attention to the far-reaching effects of the losses of these resource values by calling a multistate seminar to discuss possible solutions to the problem.

The Governor's Seminar on the Mississippi Delta Hardwoods, co-sponsored by the Arkansas Planning Commission and the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, was held in Little Rock on December 1. This Seminar, publicity generated during the course of the study, and the nation-wide awareness of the need to preserve environmental qualities, have helped smooth the way for progress in the effort to preserve Delta hardwood areas.

INTRODUCTION

Since World War II, there has been a gradual awakening, on the part of sportsmen, businessmen, and resource managers to the loss of wetlands and associated woodlands in Eastern Arkansas. The Arkansas Planning Commission commissioned this study to determine the rate and extent of these losses, to analyse the forces and trends affecting these losses, and to devise a plan of action for the preservation of some of the wetland and wooded remnants in the Delta portion of Arkansas.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The study has revealed that the destruction of wetlands and woodlands in the Delta Region of Arkansas has reached almost catastrophic proportions. Approximately 150,000 acres of Delta timberlands have been cleared during each of the last ten years. This rate of clearing cannot be maintained for many more years because considerably less than two million acres of woodlands remain in the entire ten million acre Delta Region in Eastern Arkansas. The annual rate is expected to decline, but it appears that ultimately, unless some definite and aggressive action is taken to the contrary, practically every privately owned wooded acre in Eastern Arkansas will be cleared. Even virtually all the

lone trees and rows of trees growing alongside roads and streams seem destined for elimination.

The study revealed that approximately ninety percent of all Delta woodlands cleared during the last decade was cleared for the purpose of growing soybeans. Of more significance than the purpose, though, is the imbalance between agricultural and all other resource values which has led to the draining of most of the wetlands and the clearing of most of the woodlands.

The study also revealed that the Federal Government has been a major influence in creating this imbalance. The principal activities of the Government which have helped to create this imbalance have been Federal programs and Federal spending for flood control, drainage, stream channelization, farm improvements, price supports, subsidy payments, and export subsidies on agricultural crops.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- I. Institute a direct action program to preserve wetlands and associated woodlands by the following means:
 - A. There should be a massive program by the Department of the Interior to acquire titles and perpetual easements.
 - B. The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission should concentrate a large portion of its administrative and financial resources on the purchase of Delta woodlands.
 - C. The Arkansas Planning Commission should press for legislation to:
 1. Promulgate a program for the preservation of natural areas.
 2. Protect cypress and other water tolerant trees growing below the normal high water mark on navigable streams.
 3. Maintain state ownership of all islands in navigable streams not previously disposed of and all islands that may be formed in future years.
 - D. The State Highway Commission, in its highway beautification activity, should emphasize the planting of cypress and other trees wherever feasible along rights-of-way in the Delta Region.
 - E. The Mississippi River Parkway Commission should acquire easements on most of the wooded tracts within sight of the Great River Road.
 - F. The United States Forest Service should complete the purchase of privately owned tracts within the boundary of the St. Francis National Forest.
 - G. The State Department of Education should assist in the acquisition and preservation of wooded areas, to be used for conservation education, near all schools located in the Delta.
 - H. The State Archeological Survey and other state agencies involved in the Arkansas Preservation Program should pay particular attention to the preservation of the Indian mounds and other evidences of America's culture and heritage that are located in the Delta Region.
 - I. The federal government should assist in the acquisition of wooded areas near all communities, towns, and cities located in the Delta.
- II. Encourage the preservation of Delta wetlands and associated woodlands by providing economic incentives to landowners by the following means:
 - A. The federal government should pay subsidies to landowners generally as proposed in the Water Bank Act or similar Federal legislation.

- B. The federal government should make low cost loans and other subsidies available to the Delta segment of the wood products industry.
 - C. The Federal and State agencies concerned with timber resources should provide increased financial and technical assistance to owners of Delta timber.
- III. Discourage the destruction of Delta wetlands and woodlands by the following means:
- A. Establish a policy to suppress bringing additional agricultural land into production until there is a national need for more agricultural land.
 - B. Agencies concerned with resource management should review all Federal construction projects.
 - C. The Federal and State Governments should expand the scope of current regulations on floodplain zoning to include protection of woodlands in critical areas.
 - D. The State Legislature should enact stream legislation similar to that previously proposed.

DISCUSSION

Publicity

Shortly after the Commission initiated the Study, the Commission members requested the Consultant to obtain publicity on the study. This request was made because the Commissioners realized that the drainage of wetlands and the clearing of woodlands in the Delta was proceeding at a very rapid rate. They felt that the public should be informed about these environmental losses as soon as possible rather than wait until after the study was completed.

Fortunately, the Regional Editor of the Arkansas Democrat was aware of the importance of environmental conservation and recognized the newsworthiness of a preliminary report on the study. This report was published on the front page of the Arkansas Democrat (the newspaper that has the second largest circulation in the state) on Sunday, May 18, 1969. It featured a colored wetland scene and a graph depicting woodland losses during the four previous decades. The article also contained comments about the study that were made by Dr. Winston Beard, Director of the Planning Commission, and by Mr. Roy Wood, Regional Director of the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. This article generated considerable interest within the state and also resulted in an editorial comment in the Shreveport (Louisiana) Journal.

Next, the Consultant was invited to write an article on the study for Arkansas Development Digest, a bimonthly publication of the University of Arkansas Agriculture Extension Service. This article which was published in the July — August 1969 issue of the Digest focused attention on the economic and social aspects of the deterioration of the natural environment in Eastern Arkansas. It was reprinted on its entirety in several papers in Eastern Arkansas including the Blytheville Courier News, The Newport Daily Independent and the Stuttgart Daily Leader. It was also reprinted in the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission's magazine.

Soybean Controversy

It became apparent, rather early during the course of the study, that at least ninety percent of the land that had been cleared in Eastern Arkansas during the previous decade had been cleared to grow soybeans. It also became apparent that the vast majority of Arkansas' soybean farmers were not in favor of any more land being cleared to grow soybeans. Many farmers who had already cleared all the land they owned and who were not also in the business of storing

and processing beans, or in the business of selling seed, fertilizer, equipment or fuel to other bean growers (and therefore not likely to profit personally from a further expansion in the production of beans) were alarmed by the further expansion of this crop which had already accumulated a tremendous surplus.

On October 1, the Consultant published and began a limited but nationwide distribution of a mimeographed letter addressed to Dear Fellow Conservationist. This letter recommended that the Department of Agriculture include soybeans within the acreage control program to the extent necessary to assure that no more woodlands could be cleared to grow soybeans. A brief report substantiating this recommendation was attached to the letter.

A package which contained copies of the soybean information and copies of the Destruction of Our Most Valuable Wildlife Habitat (a paper which was later presented at the October meeting of the Southeastern Association of Game and Fish Commissioners) was sent to the Consultant's brother-in-law, who is a member of Congress. This Texas Congressman distributed copies of this material to each of the thirty five members of the House Agricultural Committee. Within a few days, the Consultant received letters from some of the Committee members acknowledging receipt of the material and expressing concern for the environmental problem.

On October 5, the twelve-state Southern Beekeepers Association adopted at their annual convention a resolution urging the Secretary of Agriculture to include acreage controls on soybeans for environmental conservation purposes.

On Sunday, October 12, the Arkansas Democrat published an article about the recommendation. Across the top two thirds of the front page was a photograph of a big area in Woodruff County that had been completely denuded of all trees and bushes. The caption beneath the photograph stated "A Forest of Hardwood Timber Stood Here".

The article, which was continued on the inside pages, contained comments from the President of the Arkansas Farm Bureau and the President of the Arkansas Soybean Association opposing the recommendation, and from the President of the Arkansas Farmers Union supporting the recommendation. The Consultant purchased a large number of this Sunday edition and sent fifty five copies of the clipping to selected individuals outside the state.

An inquiry from a representative of the soybean industry to the Planning Commission revealed that the Commission had not formally approved the recommendation that Arkansas' largest cash crop be subjected to acreage controls. This brought on another flurry of news items on radio, television, and in the newspapers. Then, a statement from Dr. John M. Peterson, the new Director of the Planning Commission, defending the right of a private consultant to make an independent recommendation (plus the announcement that the Consultant had obtained prior approval to make his independent recommendation) kept the publicity flowing when it might have otherwise stopped. An article featuring a second interview with the President of the Arkansas Farm Bureau revealed that there is considerable concern within the Bureau about the natural environment in the Delta.

The Southeastern Association of Game and Fish Commissioners, at the Directors meeting in Mobile on October 21, adopted a resolution recommending acreage controls on soybeans to the extent that no more woodlands could be cleared to grow the crop. The same resolution was also adopted at the annual meeting of the Southeastern Section of the Wildlife Society. This and other information was forwarded to selected individuals who could contract key personnel within the Department of Agriculture.

The Memphis Commercial Appeal published a feature article on Sunday November 16 entitled "Hardwoods or Soybeans? Delta Land Clearings Stir Outcry". This article quoted the Consultant and the Associate Administrator of the Agricultural Stabilization Conservation Service. The ASC Official in Washington stated, "We are very concerned about the timber interests, or other

conservation interests, writing the program for soybean producers". The article also quoted several people interested in the production of hardwood timber in the Delta, the Executive Vice President of the Delta Council, Stoneville, Mississippi, and two former presidents of the American Soybean Association. The comments of these officials revealed a genuine concern for the welfare of both the soybean and timber industries and for environmental qualities in the Delta. This article and other information received made it apparent that "pay dirt" had been struck.

ASC Change

On November 21, the Agricultural Stabilization Conservation Service issued a regulation change which affected land clearing nationwide. This change simply states, "Of noncropland, brought into cropland status, except where land is taken from the farm by an agency having the right of eminent domain, there shall be land added to the acreage conservancy acre for acre."

This may have been as strong an action as the Secretary of Agriculture could take toward stopping the destruction of our most valuable wildlife habitat without the benefit of additional legislation.

Exceptions to the new regulation are being permitted where farmers had contracted to have additional land cleared prior to November 21, 1969. Also, the regulation does not prevent the clearing of land for the establishment of a new farm.

This regulation does not make it illegal to clear land or to grow crops on newly cleared land. But in most cases it is not economically feasible to clear land other than for growing crops nor to clear land for crops if an equal amount of cropland on the farm will have to be taken out of cropland production. Comparatively very little land has been cleared in Eastern Arkansas since January 1, 1970.

The Governor's Seminar

Prior to initiating the study (which was begun February 1, 1969) Mr. Roy Wood, Regional Director of the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, had suggested that attention could be focused on the problem by having a seminar. He discussed this possibility with the Director of the Planning Commission again in June and preliminary planning was begun at that time. Mr. Forrest Durand, Assistant Regional Director of the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, and Mr. Burl Bush, Chief, Resource Development Division, of the Arkansas Planning Commission, were designated as staff members of the two agencies to coordinate planning for the Seminar. Since essentially the same problem exists in the Delta portion of the other states bordering the Mississippi River, it was decided it should be a multistate seminar.

Letters from Governor Winthrop Rockefeller were sent to several hundred people in Arkansas and other states inviting them to attend the Seminar. Attached to the letter of invitation was a copy of the article by the Consultant that had been previously published in the July — August issue of the Arkansas Development Digest.

The Governor's Seminar on the Mississippi Delta Hardwoods, co-sponsored by the Arkansas Planning Commission and the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, was held on December 1. The large meeting room on the top floor of Little Rock's Lafayette Hotel was packed to capacity with businessmen, farmers, conservationists, and others who had come to hear and to take part in the discussion.

The formal portion of the program consisted of a series of papers presented by resource managers of national prominence. The informal portion consisted primarily of question and answer sessions.

The exhibit in the foyer featured a display of Miss Lily Peter's color photographs of Delta wetlands and woodlands. Miss Peter, a prominent Eastern

Arkansas planter, recited at the noon luncheon two of her poems on trees. It was also announced at the luncheon that Miss Peter was donating to the State a forty-acre tract of virgin timber. This tract, one of the very few virgin tracts left in the Delta, is being donated as a contribution to environmental conservation in Eastern Arkansas.

Congressman Wilbur Mills, who was born and raised in the Delta and who is Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, was the principal speaker at the luncheon meeting. He reviewed Eastern Arkansas' woodland losses and stressed some of the measures needed to alleviate the problem.

The Governor's Seminar was very successful. It demonstrated, in a manner that would be difficult to demonstrate by any other means, the valid and knowledgeable concern that resource managers, businessmen, and political leaders have for environmental losses in the Delta. It has helped and is still helping smooth the way for accomplishments of considerable proportions in this environmental conservation effort. For instance, Mr. Andrew Hulseby, Director of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, has credited the Seminar with being a major factor in helping the Game and Fish Commission receive a supplemental appropriation to purchase land. This million and a half dollar supplemental appropriation was approved without a dissenting vote in the Special Session of the State Legislature in January, 1970.

Current Status

"Disappearing Wetlands in Eastern Arkansas", the publication of the final report for the first phase of the study, is expected to be received from the printer prior to the date of the Atlanta meeting of the Southeastern Association of Game and Fish Commissioners. The second phase of a detailed plan of preservation will be completed in the spring of 1971. It will include a proposed five-year schedule of acquisition and other means of preserving individual areas of outstanding value to environmental conservation.

CONCLUSION

The effort to preserve the remaining wetlands and associated wooded areas within the Delta is part of a much larger crusade to preserve environmental qualities nationwide. This nation is riding on the crest of a wave of popular support for environmental conservation. The time for aggressive but intelligent action to achieve major accomplishments for conservation has arrived.

APPENDIX

A1 Letter to Dear Fellow Conservationist A2 Program of Governor's Seminar

A1 (Minus enclosure)

2100 Arch Street
Little Rock, Arkansas 72206
October 1, 1969

Dear Fellow Conservationist:

We have been sitting around and letting our most valuable wildlife habitat be destroyed throughout most of Eastern Arkansas, most of the delta portions of the other states that border the Mississippi River, and also in most other alluvial areas in the nation.

Now that all these "mosts" have already occurred we have another "most" — a most opportune chance to do something that will bring most of this destruction of our most productive wildlife habitat to a screeching halt — at least for

the next few years. That would give us the time we need to achieve some permanent accomplishments for environmental conservation.

Secretary of Agriculture Hardin, in his recent announcement of his farm program, neither opened nor closed the door on acreage controls on soybeans. There are some powerful farm organizations and thousands of individual soybean farmers who want acreage controls on beans, but unfortunately there also are some on the other side.

All we have to do is help to convince Congress and the Department of Agriculture that soybeans should be included in the acreage control program to the extent necessary to assure that *no* more woodlands could be cleared to grow soybeans. Those of us who are interested in wildlife, in the quality of the natural environment, and in fixing things so Eastern Arkansas and other Delta areas will add to, rather than detract from, the prosperity and tranquility of future generations have never been heard from on acreage control questions.

Enclosed are some excerpts from a preliminary draft of a final report that is being prepared on a study of delta woodlands. There are several other recommendations which are being made but the timing is so hot on this soybean problem that we couldn't wait on the publication of the full report.

Thanks for your support in this effort.

Sincerely,

Trusten H. Holder
Wildlife Consultant

Enclosure
THH/ecc

A2

THE GOVERNOR'S SEMINAR
ON THE
MISSISSIPPI DELTA HARDWOODS

LaFayette Hotel
Little Rock, Arkansas
December 1, 1969

MORNING SESSION

Opening Remarks — Martin Borchert, Chairman, Arkansas
Planning Commission, and Roy K. Wood,
Regional Director, Southeast Region,
Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, Atlanta,
Georgia

Introduced by — Burl K. Bush, Chief, Resource Development
Division, Arkansas Planning Commission,
Little Rock, Arkansas

Welcome — Honorable Maurice "Footsie" Britt, Lieutenant Governor,
State of Arkansas

The Delta Hardwoods Heritage — William E. Towell, Executive Vice-President
The American Forestry Association
Washington, D. C.

Introduced by — Fred W. Stanberry, Director
Tennessee Game and Fish Commission
Nashville, Tennessee

The Delta Hardwoods — Past, Present and Future — From the Industrial
Viewpoint — Charles F. Carlton, National Chairman,
Wildlife and Recreation Committee,
American Forest Institute — (Associated
with R. F. Learned & Son, Inc., Natchez,
Mississippi)

Introduced by — Virgil W. Cothren, State Forester,
Forestry Commission, Little Rock,
Arkansas

The Delta Hardwoods — Wildlife Resources — Richard K. Yancey, Assistant
Director, Louisiana Wildlife
and Fisheries Commission,
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Introduced by — Lawrence S. Givens, Assistant Regional
Director, Bureau of Sport Fisheries and
Wildlife, Atlanta, Georgia

Discussion — Chaired by — Bruce Tucker, Executive Director
Lower Mississippi Valley Association,
Memphis, Tennessee

Introduced by — Andrew Hulsey, Director, Arkansas Game and
Fish Commission, Little Rock, Arkansas

LUNCHEON MEETING

Address by the Honorable Wilbur D. Mills, Member of Congress,
Second Congressional District, State of Arkansas

Introduced by — Martin Borchert, Chairman, Arkansas
Planning Commission

AFTERNOON SESSION

Agriculture in the Delta — Dr. John White, Vice President
for Agriculture, University of
Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas

Introduced by — Dr. Frank Hayes, Director, S. E. Cooperative
Wildlife Disease Study, Athens, Georgia

Mechanical Manipulation of the Natural Environment — Dr. Clarence Cottam,
Welder Wildlife
Foundation, Sinton
Texas

Introduced by — Trusten H. Holder, Consultant
Arkansas Planning Commission, Little
Rock, Arkansas

The Region's Socioeconomic Aspects — James E. Hand, Jr., Delta
Implement Company & Associated
Corporations, Greenville,
Mississippi

Introduced by — J. S. McKnight, Southern Forest Experiment
Station, Stoneville, Mississippi

Summary and Action Recommendations — Roy K. Wood, Regional Director,
Southeast Region, Bureau of
Outdoor Recreation, Atlanta,
Georgia

Discussion — Chaired by John Harmon, Wood Procurement Manager,
Westvaco, Wickliffe, Kentucky

Introduced by — Harold Alexander, Biologist, Arkansas
Planning Commission, Little Rock, Arkansas

Arkansas Planning Commission

Bureau of Outdoor Recreation

A PRELIMINARY SURVEY OF PESTICIDE RESIDUES IN WHITETAIL DEER (*Odocoileus virginianus*)

By DAN COTTON and JACK HERRING
Mississippi Game & Fish Commission

Abstract

A pesticide analysis was run on 21 deer collected from the Mississippi Delta Region during the winter of 1969-1970.

The primary tissues analyzed were flesh, liver and fat. The residues found were DDT and its metabolites. Average DDT and metabolites concentrations of the tissues were: flesh 0.062 p.p.m.; liver 0.194 p.p.m.; fat 1.210 p.p.m.

INTRODUCTION

Due to the plethora of pesticide usage in the Mississippi Delta Region, the Mississippi Game and Fish Commission initiated a survey of pesticide residues in whitetail deer of this region.

Several investigators have found pesticide residues in fish flesh, water and bottom sediments of lakes within the Delta Region; Prather and Ferguson (1966), Barthel, et al. (1969), Bingham (1969), Herring and Cotton (1970). Prior to this time no residue analysis of whitetail deer had been made in this region. However, in other areas of the country, residue analyses of whitetail deer, mule deer and elk have been made. In South Dakota 23 whitetail deer were found to contain an average of 0.2 p.p.m. of DDT+metabolites in renal fat; Greenwood, et al. (1967). Jewel (1967) found mule deer fat to range from 0.4-2.8 p.p.m. of endrin. Pillmore and Finley (1963) reported finding 0.05-42.0 p.p.m. of DDT+metabolites in mule deer from Montana, Colorado and New Mexico.

The purpose of this paper is to report the residues found in whitetail deer collected during the winter of 1969-1970 from three areas in the Mississippi Delta Region.