

The aesthetic value of hunting and fishing has been displayed before you by well known writers and it needs no elaboration by me. Sure, we like to hunt and fish; we like to eat and sleep too, but eating and sleeping are not in much danger. We are conservationists in the finest sense; it is our work; it is our life.

Participation in the program helps each conservationist to understand the problems a duck faces just coming into a harsh, competitive world. He will understand the problems and chances of a duck ever reaching adulthood, and its chances of ever returning to the ancestral home in the North. It would be an unusual man indeed who could not return home and not be an ardent advocate of waterfowl conservation.

## **PUBLIC RELATIONS—ITS VALUE AS A TOOL OF ENFORCEMENT**

By CHARLES D. KELLEY, CHIEF  
*Game and Fish Division*  
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I am most appreciative for the opportunity of speaking to you today and wish to extend special thanks to Bill Davis and his committee. I realize that many of you have given up some fun along the Mississippi Coast to attend this session, but rest assured, there is ample time left to take care of what money you brought.

The role of public relations in the game and fish law enforcement program is far more important than most people realize. Not only does good public relations allow you to do a better job of apprehending violators and gaining court convictions; it also works to reduce the desire of the hunting and fishing public to violate the law in the first place. Certainly without good public relations your job would be far more difficult.

In preparing this paper I caught myself wondering just what is meant by public relations. I knew that it meant the working with the public to gain greater support for a program, but for a formal definition I turned to Mr. Webster. His definition stated: "The activities of a corporation, union, government, or other organization in building and maintaining sound and productive relations with special publics such as customers, employees, or stockholders, and with the public at large, so as to adapt itself to its environment and interpret itself to society."

Certainly the above definition includes the work of the conservation officer for he deals with a special public and finds it necessary to mold this public to an understanding of the job to be done. For anyone to think that he can do the very best work without public understanding and acceptance is ridiculous. Too often in the past conservation employees, both in the enforcement and technical field, have gone about their duties with an air of the "public be damned". This attitude not only hindered the specific task of the individual but cast a reflection on the entire organization for which he worked. Experience is a good teacher, and through the years qualified enforcement officers have learned the value of a cooperative public and have found the job of game law enforcement much easier where a good public relations program is in effect.

Who is responsible for the administration of a good public relations program? Some employees seem to think the job should be handled entirely by the Information and Education Section; others feel that the supervisors should take a part, while more and more are coming to realize that everyone is responsible if success is to be had.

For any employee of an organization to think that he is unimportant in a successful public relations program is a grave error. It has been proven time and again that all the good work of an entire group can quickly be destroyed by a caustic remark of one individual. No sound public relations program can be administered without a high spirit of cooperation of everyone within the organization.

To effectuate a good public relations program some basic points must be considered. First, and perhaps the most important, is the work policy of the organization. Unless employees have a proper understanding of the directives and policies under which they work there is little opportunity for them to sell their program to the public. When there is a breakdown in good public relations the administrator must absorb the blame unless he has clearly outlined the duties of his employees and allocated proper responsibility and authority to those working under him. In like manner, the employee must take the blame if he lets his personal thinking and actions differ from those of his organization when dealing with the public. Coordinated thinking and cooperative action go a long way in making the conservation officer's work successful.

Our Conservation Department's public relations program is geared to a cooperative working relationship among all employees; not only in the Division of Game and Fish but in the other agencies such as Forestry, Water Safety, Seafoods, and Parks. We have learned through experience that the public has no better opinion of the entire organization than its most useless members, therefore, we are constantly striving to correct mistakes, improve personnel where improvements are needed, and carry on other actions which will lead to a more cordial relationship with the public.

The public's appreciation of the conservation officer has grown immensely during recent years. The growth in popularity is due to the efforts of the officers on the one hand and a greater desire on the part of the public for good game and fish protection on the other. This appreciation increase will continue to grow, but could grow much faster if certain mistakes on the part of some enforcement officers could be eliminated.

How many times have you heard a law enforcement officer express regret at having to enforce a particular law? I dare say that many of you have done so in years past. Why? If the laws we are charged with enforcing are so bad that we must apologize to those persons violating them then the best action would be to get rid of those laws and obtain some for which we can feel proud. If we, the people charged with enforcing the game and fish laws, can't convince ourselves that the laws are good and will benefit the fish and wildlife resources, then how in the devil can we expect the public to believe in them?

We have a standing invitation to all members of our Game and Fish Division to comment on any or all laws that appear unworkable or useless and to offer suggestions for improvement. During the past few months several regulations have been changed, and during the coming session of the state legislature some laws will be repealed or changed because qualified personnel of our department have proven them outdated and unworkable. Good laws are a pleasure to enforce but no one gets pleasure from spending his time and effort enforcing a law that is of no benefit whatsoever.

I have been working with the Alabama Department of Conservation for several years, and during that time I have had many occasions to disagree personally with the policies or programs in operation. Quite often I have commented on this dissatisfaction with employees of the department and to my superiors, but not once have I carried this displeasure to the public. All of you know what happens when one employee expresses himself contrary to the job he is charged with carrying out. Immediately the public loses faith in the organization and discontinues support of other programs which may be more popular with the particular employee. This loss of public support should be avoided at all times, for after all, the public is the final boss, and without its support our positions are short lived.

A united effort among enforcement officers is absolutely necessary if we are to maintain sound public support. In past years there have been conflicts between state and federal enforcement agents and will probably be more in the future. These conflicts, if allowed to reach the public could bring on a wholesale breakdown in certain phases of our enforcement program. Fortunately, the differences have been worked out among the respective agencies, and today, in Alabama, we have an excellent working relationship between the federal agents and our own officers.

Of great importance to our efforts toward gaining public acceptance of our enforcement program is the type cases we make. In our own operation we have found that good cases meet with public approval while poor cases bring criticism on both the arresting officer and the organization. Our standing policy

in Alabama is to be convinced without doubt of a hunter or fisherman's guilt before arrest. To do otherwise runs the risk of punishing an innocent person for which the arresting officer will never be forgiven.

Let me point out here that we do not rate our officers by the number of cases they make; neither do we rate them by the number of speeches or public appearances they make. Enforcement personnel of our Game and Fish Division are rated by a number of factors which reflect whether good judgment is used in making cases, proper attention to the requests of the community for talks and appearances, and adherence to policies set forth by superiors. Other points of rating include personal appearance, methods of handling complaints, and cooperation with fellow officers. Overall performance is the only fair way to appraise the work of the officer for it gives him the opportunity of exercising his own judgment and fitting his work to the needs of the community in which he works.

The enforcement officer should at all times work toward convincing the public that his job is not solely to catch violators, but instead, to protect the fish and wildlife resources through the best use of the tools with which he has to work. To prevent a violation which saves the fish and wildlife resources for the legal hunter or fisherman is far better than to have the violation take place just for the sake of making a case. Our future with the public is dependent upon a plan of action which will assure maximum protection of our game resources. This plan is simple; apply good, common-sense judgment to the work and you will seldom go wrong.

Bill, I want to again thank you and your committee for this opportunity and wish to assure all of you the cooperation of Alabama in the Southeastern States' Game and Fish program.

## MAINTENANCE OF COOPERATIVE RELATIONS WITH COURTS AND OTHER AGENCIES

By ELLIOTT H. LOTT, *Area Supervisor*  
*Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission*

Game and fish law enforcement is not easy. Any sheriff or highway patrolman will readily admit that a game warden—or wildlife officer, as we are known in Florida—has a difficult and potentially dangerous job. By virtue of the fact that a great many of the people with whom we deal have the idea that game and fish laws were made to apply, not to them but, to the "other fellow" our efforts are often not appreciated. Much of our work is in wilderness areas and the hunter or fisherman we meet is usually armed with a loaded, deadly weapon. In weather good or bad, we work long hours under the most strenuous conditions. This all adds up to one thing—we wildlife law enforcement officers have a tremendous job on our hands.

Since our jobs are difficult, it is sensible that we consider ways and means of making our work easier and, at the same time, more effective.

Being dedicated to good law enforcement, we are naturally interested in ways of achieving *better* law enforcement. As our efficiency increases, it is most certain that violations will decrease.

It is a fact that good law enforcement is *impossible* without good public relations, just as it is impossible to have an arch without a keystone. Without its keystone of good public relations, productive law enforcement will cease to be productive and will eventually collapse entirely. It follows, therefore, that the wildlife law enforcement officer who fails or neglects to place the proper values on his relations with the public will speedily arrive at the end of his career. From a *lame* duck he will become a very *dead* duck.

When we consider the mechanics of public relations, it is well for us to remember that in a democracy such as ours, we have and will always have what the majority of the people want. It is by this precept that we have conservation laws and enforcement officers, such as you and I, to enforce these laws. We enforcement officers, as such, are products of the people and of the people alone. Consequently, we are concerned with people and how to get along with them. Public relations is just that—*getting along with people*—nothing more or nothing less.