

convince our antagonists that it is vital to the welfare of world wildlife populations that we continue to manage, or manipulate if you will, and that both protection and harvest are essential tools of the trade."

The profile of the user is changing as the people move off the farms into the "asphalt jungle," where the firearm is a tool of violence in commission of crimes, rather than a companion of the hunter in the field or autumn woods. The larger numbers of urbanites are demanding closer in and more open space for their enjoyment out-of-doors. The use of guns here may not be compatible with such prescribed use due to limited area. However, it is up to us as wildlife professionals to hear our opponents out and show a respect for their own particular philosophies. But then we must firmly convince the "moralist protectionist" that we need to recognize the real cause for decline of our wildlife, not by the angler's rod nor the hunter's gun, but by the loss of suitable habitat through degradation of life-supporting quality environment because of man's destructive activities.

So my belief is that the user has to exhibit a strong chin-out conviction that he must support the wildlife professional to retain and restore, where necessary, an adequate environment and its variety of animals for the enjoyment of all in whatever way he wishes to pursue that pleasure.

## FEDERAL AID TO HUNTER SAFETY

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It is with great personal pleasure that I have been asked to participate in the Hunter Safety session of the I & E Section of the Southeastern Association of Game and Fish Commissioners. Also to be able to spend several days in the charming city of Charleston and the beautiful State of South Carolina. Although I may sound like a "damn yankee," I want you all to know I am a resident of Maryland, *south* of the Mason Dixon line.

The idea and practice of hunter safety is as old as the firearm, the bow and arrow, and most likely back to the stone axe. I can hear the first hunter safety lecture which may have sounded like this, "Now son, this is the way you daddy throw the stone axe. And remember, don't throw it if mommy or daddy are in the way," or "Be sure you release the handle just the way I demonstrated or you may lose a leg." So for all practical purposes, let us say basic hunter safety is as old as hunting.

Formative firearm education, as we know it, began in New York State in 1949 when the first law was enacted in mandatory firearms safety instructions as a prerequisite to purchasing a license. This has been copied across the Nation and presently there are 16 mandatory State programs, 25 voluntary Statewide programs, with most of the remaining nine States developing programs due to the passage of Public Law 91-503.

This law amends, in part, the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act, commonly called the Pittman-Robertson Act, to provide for the use of excise tax monies collected on pistols and revolvers. One-half of the revenues accruing to the fund from any tax imposed on pistols and revolvers shall be apportioned among the States in proportion to the ratio that the population of each State bears to the population of all the States. No State shall receive more than 3 per centum nor less than 1 per centum of such revenues. Specifically, the Act reads,

"Each State may use the funds apportioned to it under Section 4(b) of this Act to pay up to 75 per centum of the costs of a hunter safety program and the construction, operation, and maintenance of public outdoor target ranges, as a part of such program."

Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife involvement is currently aimed at providing financial assistance to States with ongoing programs and giving incentive and direction to States without programs. A few States are using the new revenue for their entire program with nearly a total loss of former funding. In fact, one large State now spends less for Hunter Safety than they did prior to the passage of Public Law 91-503. Fortunately, these States are few in number; however, it should be considered a very significant step in the wrong direction. It must be recognized that this is a natural trend in an underbudgeted agency and each division, unit or department will contrive to all methods to increase their own allotments. New programs, such as Hunter Safety, will suffer this form of temporary setback; therefore, each program administrator must review their programs and prepare for a difficult campaign.

A review of programs proposed or approved for federal assistance encompasses a large variety of items from target ranges to typewriters, pistols to patches, salaries to stationery, etc. From available information, 21 State projects have been approved or are in the process of review and approval. As anticipated, there is only minor similarity between State programs at this time. During the period Fiscal Year 1972 through 1976, 11 States plan to build target ranges, six want to lease private ranges; three have scheduled production for films and training manuals for instructors and students, whereas the remainder will use the NRA program; four will begin research in hunter safety covering hunting accidents; 12 will have full time paid staffs; three will teach extensive survival programs including first-aid; and all 21 plan to use a portion of the Federal Aid funds for equipment such as teaching aids.

Similarity does occur when standard programs of NRA are utilized; however, this should not be confused with individuality as related to actual instruction. The most important factor to remember is the quality of education is only as good as the ability of the educator. A good salesman is, of course, one who sells his product.

A good Hunter Safety Program will (1) reduce accidents, (2) improve the natural resource, and (3) provide a favorable relationship between the sportsman and the landowner. How do we accomplish this type program?

Recruitment and extensive training of instructors is the backbone of any program. Without competent instructors, the project will fail. A complete upgrading of instructor certification is obvious when reviewing present programs. The State Hunter Safety Coordinators of the Northeast Region, at a recent meeting, established a committee to study the problem and develop a cure. It is our hope that this action, combined with the efforts of others, will formulate a National Standard for the Certification of Instructors.

Secondly, the selection or creation of a complete and standardized course is mandatory. In addition to basic firearm safety, this should include wildlife management and identification, Federal and State laws and regulations, hunting techniques, and sportsmanship. The shortcomings of educational materials, subject matter, and length of study is evident and easily recognizable when one reviews many ongoing programs.

Total time spent on instruction now varies from two hours to more than 20 hours, and the number of training sessions from one to more than 28. A single session of eight hours may be inadequate, however, four sessions of two hours each could provide acceptable training. Personal contacts, retention of knowledge, individual participation are a few areas considered in the learning process. Evidence for the need of improved training is recognized and several States are in the process of developing new and much expanded programs. An educational program should be developed which could be used as a national standard.

The third and very important step in developing a good program is live firing on a target range. Much like driver education, potential hunters should have actual experience in the use of firearms. Many suggest this segment of the Hunter Training program exceeds the States' possibilities because of expense, lack of shooting facilities, insurance and adequate instructors. These problems are real, but they are not unsolvable. It is impossible for many States to provide target range facilities; however, they may enter into agreements with sportsmen's clubs to lease facilities. We feel live firing is an area where the program can be improved.

One final problem which we should strive to eliminate is the problem of reciprocity. Of course, the basic solution lies in a Standard National Hunter Safety Program. However, many States will have to deal with the problem of reciprocity through legislative action to change existing laws. At the recent meeting of the Northeastern States reciprocity was discussed and a committee appointed to study the problem and make recommendations. The results of this committee should be available in early 1972.

Most indicators point to a bright future for the Hunter Safety Programs across the Nation. Public interest is rapidly increasing in harmony with their concern for the natural resources. State fish and game departments are recognizing this and reacting by evolving new programs. The new Federal Aid program, we hope, will further stimulate this movement, and greatly assist the many excellent ongoing programs.

Our role in the Bureau will be to continue to support the present trend of the States. We will be looking at many existing programs in an effort to create the highest possible standards. Review and revision of policy will enhance the overall program.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that we view the Hunter Safety Program as a new trial in a very old forest. To help keep the forest beautiful, our directional signs will be held to a minimum and totally blend with the environment. Again, I wish to thank you for the opportunity to participate in your program.