

GENERAL SESSION

THE SPORTSMEN'S PLACE IN CONSERVATION

CARL D. SHOEMAKER, Conservation Director, National Wildlife Federation

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There is a natural tendency for hunters and fishermen — being good fellows, good companions, good story tellers — to get together and form a club. And it has been a very fortunate thing for America that this is so.

Maybe the original purpose of the club was simply to get together to swap yarns of heroic exploits with rod and gun and to share the enjoyment of a fish fry or venison dinner. But hunters and fisherman don't talk very long before they begin to wonder and discuss why the fish don't seem to grow as big or strike so readily in the old fishing hole as they did a generation ago, of why there seems to be only one covey of birds on the old farm where there used to be two or three. They begin to talk about these things, and look into the causes, and then they start planning things that can be done about it. Next thing you know, the sportsman's club is preaching soil conservation, starting projects for restocking the streams and planting new game cover, and sending delegations to see the state legislature and the fish and game department. There you have the makings of a conservation club.

Again, this has been a most fortunate thing for America. The first great push which this country received along the road to conservation, and to restoration of disappearing natural resources, was given it by groups and federations of sportsmen's clubs turned conservationists.

Turn back the pages of history, for example, to the Boone and Crockett Club, organized in 1887, and to the League of American Sportsmen, which no longer exists, but which had its origin in 1898. These organizations played an important part in the passage of the Lacey Act in 1900, which has been rightfully called one of the most important conservation laws ever passed by the National Congress.

As the years passed, and natural resources faced new problems of depletion and exhaustion as the population boomed and industrialization and intensive farming spread across the land, we find more and stronger sportsmen's organizations taking up their cudgels for conservation. They got behind National Forest programs to conserve and manage for sustained yields and watershed protection the dwindling timber reserves of the nation. They threw their enthusiasm and strength behind the national parks movement to preserve the great scenic places of America for future generations to enjoy. They plumped for soil erosion control; they stirred up the biggest noise about stream pollution. In short, ladies and gentlemen, they got things done.

As all of us here know, the period of greatest advancement in American wildlife management has occurred during the fifteen years since the drouths and dust-bowls of the mid-1930s dramatized the conservation problem and brought forcibly home to the public the plight of wildlife resources. It was not at all coincidental or unrelated that the First North American Wildlife Conference was called in the nation's capital by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1936. It was at that conference that the National Wildlife Federation was formed, the first successful attempt to bind together and coordinate all the various interests and organizations that were working for conservation.

The National Wildlife Federation had its organizational problems in the beginning. It takes money to run a national conservation organization, just the same as it does to operate a local rod and gun club or a state organization. There is an old saying that "money makes the mare go." The important thing is to find the money. The Federation took up the idea which was furnished it by a Kansas sportsman, who suggested that we issue gummed stickers depicting various species of wildlife and distribute these to people interested in conservation and ask for a donation of \$1.00 per sheet. The money so received, plus small receipts from the sale of other conservation material, has kept our national headquarters in operation now for about 14 years. All of the money over and above the actual cost of printing and distributing these stamps goes into the conservation movement. Our state wildlife federations, which are affiliated with the national organization, receive what is known as "grants-in-aid" for worthy conservation projects. Approximately 10 percent of the net receipts of the national Federation is set aside for this program. A project, to receive a grant-in-aid, must have a distinctive conservation slant and must be submitted to the Board of Directors. Final approval of a project is made by a committee not connected with the Federation at all, so that we can be free from any criticism or bias.

I prepare for the Federation the Conservation News Letter, in which timely and general items of wildlife interest are reported. Another service which the Federation renders is what is known as its Conservation Report, which lists with appropriate comments every bill that is introduced into Congress which has an impact upon the conservation movement, whether it be soil, water, forests, grazing of wildlife. Both of these services are sent free of charge to anyone desiring to receive them.

J. N. "Ding" Darling, the first president of the Federation and a famous cartoonist and nature artist, painted the first 17 species depicted upon the Conservation Stamps. I have attached to this paper of mine one sheet of this first issue of Conservation Stamps. Copy of this talk and a sheet of stamps are available at this meeting.

Again turning back briefly in the pages of history, I would like to quote to you some observations made twenty years ago by the late and renowned Aldo Leopold. In his famous "Game Survey of the North Central States," published in 1931, Leopold had these things to say about the role of sportsmen's organizations:

Any appraisal of game research and education at this particular moment must inevitably consist in part of a mere sketch of things hoped for, as distinguished from a recital of things accomplished. Research aimed deliberately toward the production of game crops is barely in its swaddling clothes, much less out of them. Likewise education in the idea that game is a crop is hardly a going concern, although education in game biology, and in the idea of preserving the remnants of the virgin resource, is an activity of long standing.

The motive for both game research and education must arise first of all from sportsmen's organizations . . .

The present objectives of sportsmen's organizations in the (North Central) region fall into two classes, (1) legislative work, and (2) local betterments.

The legislative projects show extreme diversity in skill and leadership. In some states the sportsmen have selected a single well-chosen objective, such as reorganization of the conservation department, and directed their combined strength towards its accomplishment, often through a period of years. The highest grade of volunteer legal, technical, and political skill has been mobilized, and the resulting enactments constitute permanently usable foundations for building up state leadership in conservation work.

In other states great quantities of useful energy have been expended in minor tinkering of the game laws, and even in factional disputes.

The local work of sportsmen's associations shows a like diversity in skill and effectiveness. Some have tended to become merely social clubs, others have successfully executed valuable educational campaigns and established refuges, plantings, rearing ponds, winter feeding stations and the like . . .

Sportsmen's organizations, like the whole conservation movement, have come a long way since Aldo Leopold wrote his discerning notes in 1928 - 29. Nevertheless, I offer you these quotations because Leopold's observations still ring true for too many sportsmen's clubs today. Too many of them are still frittering away valuable energy and influence on minor legislative matters — trying to get game seasons and limits changed, for example, instead of working for fundamental things like sound pollution laws and getting their state game departments out of politics. Too many of them still are just social clubs, or are wasting time and money on ineffective local projects of proven biological irrelevancy.

Too many of them are pursuing their lonesome, unaffiliated way, without benefit of sound guidance in local fish and game projects, and without adequate information on legislative matters — information which can be supplied to them through state and national federations and other groups.

To those of you here who are state game administrators and technicians, this situation offers at once a responsibility and an opportunity. I am talking to those of you whose job it is to work with these sportsmen's clubs — some of you may feel I should say "put up with" these clubs. You have a responsibility to supply them with proper technical guidance, especially on their local betterment projects. The energy and enthusiasm are there; if you can harness them you can get a great deal more done in wildlife restoration — not to mention the public relations benefits which will accrue to your own department.

You also have an opportunity to direct their legislative efforts toward important and worthwhile ends. Urge those independent clubs to join up with the State Wildlife Federation, and let the State and National Wildlife Federations carry the ball on legislative leadership. Thus you can help build a more powerful public sentiment for sound wildlife management — without which you can't advance very far in any state.

One more observation about the importance of state and national coordination of sportsmen's associations: Just as there are important things on the local scene that will never be accomplished without effective local organization — things like getting needed refuges established and local cover plantings rolling — so there are more important things on the statewide level than can never be accomplished without effective statewide organization. I am talking about those issues that come

up in the state legislature — politically inspired attempts to cripple your departments, for example, or to divert your funds for other purposes.

By the same token, there are great national issues which may never be resolved until we have all these local groups coordinated through their state associations with the National Wildlife Federation or other groups. Local clubs sometimes become so wrapped up in their local skeet shoots and local restocking plans, for example, they lose sight of the state and national issues. For those who would concentrate all organized effort on purely local projects, I shall venture this assertion. All the local game projects carried out independently by all the sportsmen's clubs in the Southeast, I daresay, have not benefitted game in your states half so much as one single act of Congress. I refer to the Pittman-Robertson law, which was passed only because there was a national organization, able to mobilize sentiment in many states, behind it.

By the same token, all the fish-rearing and local restocking efforts of the local clubs aren't likely to benefit your sport fishing opportunities half so much as the new Dingell-Johnson program. Again, the Dingell-Johnson law was passed by Congress only because there was coordinated national sentiment behind it.

So I say to all sportsmen club leaders, and to those whose job it is to counsel and guide them, have your local projects — they help keep the membership rolls large and the treasury solvent — but don't lose sight of the statewide and national issues.

There are a number of things that the great vast majority of sportsmen completely overlook or do not give sufficient recognition to. One of the most important is that the sportsmen pay their own bill. Not less than 95 percent of all the money that is used by the state game department and the federal Fish and Wildlife Service to manage the wildlife of the states and the nation is paid into the coffers of the state and the national governments through the purchase of license fees. It is usually referred to as the "game protection fund." These funds cannot be used for any other purpose than the preservation, protection, rehabilitation and management of the wildlife of the states. Efforts have been made from time to time by state legislatures and by governors to invade this fund and use it for other purposes than wildlife management. They have almost always failed, but occasionally they have succeeded, and such a howl went up that the next session of the legislature revoked the invasion. Sportsmen should not fail to let it be known through their clubs and their state organizations that they are the ones who are making it possible for a continuation of the sport of hunting and fishing. There are few other channels of life in which such a situation exists. It is a fine tribute to these men and women of America that they are providing the necessary funds to carry on this extremely important job of managing our wildlife.

But the demands that sportsmen make on the state fish and game departments to carry on a constantly increasing number of projects has brought about the need for higher license fees due to the increased cost of operation, supplies and materials. Too many of our sportsmen will demand more and more of their game departments but are wholly unwilling and fight vigorously any proposal to increase the price of the licenses. Let's analyze this just for a moment. What does the sportsman get for his average \$3 license fee? He may bag a limit of deer, bear, pheasants, grouse, doves, ducks, geese, squirrels, rabbits and many other species, plus an unlimited number of game fish for the price usually of only one license. Some states require a special license for big game, but these are not proportionately

high. It has been estimated that the average sportsman taking advantage of a reasonable number of days in the field or on the water each year can take approximately \$500 worth of food, valued at current grocery store prices for meats and fish. And think of the rejuvenation of mind and body that he will receive during these days in the great out-of-doors. That is priceless and adds years to his life. Instead of fighting and opposing every proposal made to increase the license fees by the game department, the sportsmen should get behind them and urge their state Representatives and state Senators to support the program of increased license fees when the game department feels they are justified. Of course, this is not a one-way street. The state game departments must take the state and local sportsmen's groups into their confidence, giving them all the facts and figures justifying such an increase. It has been my experience in over 36 years in this conservation work, the first ten years of which were as a state administrator in the fish and game departments of Oregon, that the sportsmen will, nine times out of ten, cooperate in management programs when they are given an understanding of the needs.

To my mind the most important program that the sportsmen can undertake in any state or any locality is that of working in close harmony and sincere understanding with the farmer, upon whose land most of the smaller game species are found. I am alarmed, as I travel about the country in an automobile, to find more and more land posted against hunting and fishing. Some of the farmers vary the warning by placing upon the signs "No Hunting or Fishing Allowed Without Permission of Owner." That, of course, to my way of belief, is a prerequisite to entering upon another person's property. That is the very least that a good sportsman can do. In all of the states lying east of the Rocky Mountain slopes, most of the land is in private ownership. The farmer, therefore, is a most important personage in this wildlife program. The Soil Conservation Service has as a part of its program the rehabilitation of wildlife habitat on farm lands. This need not interfere with the farmer's desire to grow crops and only takes a very limited portion of land. This includes hedge rows along the property line and other features which increase the opportunity of wildlife to find shelter and the rearing of its young. Every sportsmen's group, whether it be a local or a state organization, should have a farmer-sportsman's committee for better relationship between the two. One of the cardinal principles is, as I have already stated, first, obtaining permission to go upon the farmer's property to hunt and fish. The second virtue is to promote a more friendly and cordial relationship between the two groups. We hear the term quite frequently applied to the sportsman as being a "city slicker." At the present time the term has an unfriendly tone. The reverse English can be put upon it easily by the town sportsmen meeting now and then with the farm groups in their local communities. If I leave no other thought with you today I hope that I can impress upon you the absolute need to improve the relationship between the sportsman and the farmer if another generation of Americans is to enjoy the privileges of hunting and fishing.

Fourteen and one-half million red-blooded Americans last year purchased hunting licenses; 15.5 million purchased fishing licenses. Two million purchased Duck Stamps. The 14.5 million hunters paid in excise taxes to the Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid Fund \$17,846,423. The fishermen paid in excise taxes under the Dingell-Johnson Act for Federal Aid to State Fishery Restoration Projects \$2,900,000 this past year. All of these license feeds and excise taxes are

being devoted to one single purpose, and that is the management of the wildlife, the pursuit of which you as sportsmen enjoy from time to time in your hunting and fishing days. There are about 30,000,000 people in the United States who enjoy the privilege of a day or two or more in the open in the pursuit of this healthful recreation which can only be found in the chase of wildlife. This is about 20 percent of the total population of the United States. In other words, one out of every five people is interested in this conservation movement. That is a vast throng, and if it could be organized and devoted to the perpetuation of the sport, nothing could stop the program. It is because we have dissension within our groups, caused largely through misunderstanding and a lack of knowledge, that we fail in some of our purposes. I do not want you to misunderstand me. The wildlife management program is making tremendous strides. Many species of wildlife have increased materially during the past 50 years. This is particularly true of deer, antelope and elk. Waterfowl have had their ups and downs and apparently right now seem to be increasing slightly. Pheasants, which were first introduced into this country during the 80s in the last century, have spread from Oregon to many of our northern tier of states, particularly the Mississippi and Missouri Valleys. Rabbits still are the most sought after of our game animals, and except for spotted areas, are holding their own and increasing. These increases in wildlife species are due to better technical knowledge of the habits of wildlife and a better knowledge and know-how of management. State game departments have played a tremendously important part in this improvement in wildlife numbers. Except in a very few states, the game departments are no longer political footballs and the time will come, I hope soon, when they will be regarded as a scientific and technical branch of state administration, not to be interrupted by sheer political appointments. This is a "consummation devoutly to be wished."

In the state of Wisconsin, the sportsmen and the game department work hand in glove together. In that state they have what is known as the Wisconsin Conservation Congress. Each county elects two representatives and one alternate to the Congress. During the year these representatives have local meetings to ascertain the views and desires of the local people. These views are coordinated, and once a year the Congress meets and each and every one of these items are discussed by the representatives present. They make their recommendation to the Conservation Department. It is an interesting fact that since the Congress has been in operation, for more than 15 years, 97 percent of all the recommendations made by the sportsmen's Congress have been adopted and approved by the Conservation Department itself. The Conservation Department, however, takes the sportsmen into complete confidence on all of its problems. I commend this type of approach to other states. It will pay off big in dividends of more game and better management. Attached to this paper will be found a few important dates in the history of the conservation movement in the southeastern states. I will not undertake to read them, but those of you who are interested will have the opportunity to look them over later.

It has been a real pleasure to be here with you. I welcome the opportunity each year to spend some time in the southern states where I find congenial people and unsurpassed hospitality. You are engaged in a movement which strikes at the very roots of the preservation of our country. Wildlife is a by-product of soil, water, trees and plants. What we do to preserve and perpetuate these natural resources

increases the opportunity that future generations will have in their pursuit of wildlife.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1. A few wildlife dates.

South Carolina prohibited hunting at night by firelight. In 1779 she amended this law by prohibiting hunting at night with gun and firelight. In 1784 she prohibited fire hunting under penalty of 39 lashes, and prohibited slaves from hunting, and also prohibited hunting without permission on posted lands east of the Appalachian Mountains. In 1854 North Carolina prohibited non-residents from hunting wildfowl in the waters of Currituck County, and again in 1870 prohibited the use of any gun that could not be fired from the shoulder.

In 1772 Virginia provided for a four-year closed season on deer, and in 1792 prohibited fire hunting for deer. In 1801 Virginia protected deer from January 1 to August 1. In 1856 Virginia prohibited killing or running deer with dogs. In 1879, an act was passed in Virginia to protect turkey buzzards and black buzzards.

In 1787 the state of Tennessee passed an act paying the salaries of the governor, the chief justice and the secretary of the governor in pelts. The governor received 100 deer skins per year, the chief justice 500 deer skins, and the secretary to the governor 500 raccoon skins. In 1803, Tennessee prohibited Sunday hunting.

In 1789 South Carolina prohibited fire hunting and protected does from March 1 to September 1. The captains of the state militia were required to read the provisions of this act to their companies every six months.

In 1790 the state of Georgia passed its first game law prohibiting fire hunting.

In 1822 Alabama passed an act to suppress fire hunting and imposed a penalty of \$50. In 1854 she passed a law protecting snipe, summer ducks and poult ducks in certain counties and prohibited the killing of wild turkeys or catching them in pens, traps or snares during the closed season.

In 1859 Florida passed a law prohibiting hunting on Sunday. In 1866 Florida passed a law prohibiting hunting in closed lands without permission of the owner. In 1875 Florida passed the first non-resident license law, requiring a fee of \$25 for hunting in every county.

In 1861 Kentucky passed its first game laws, protecting bluebird, swallow, martin, robin, wren or other birds smaller than a quail, except hawk, snipe or plover.

In 1869 West Virginia passed the first law covering the protection of all non-game birds and provided an open season for the hunting of pheasants, ducks, partridge and rabbits.

In 1906 Mississippi adopted a general game law containing license, non-export and non-sale provisions.

From these scattered excerpts from southeastern state laws, it is clearly evident that the administration of wildlife has taken seven-league boot strides in the last century and a half.