

A COMMISSIONER'S VIEWPOINT ON LAW ENFORCEMENT

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Gentlemen: My knowledge is very limited to the subject of law enforcement with no experience as an officer. I hesitate to make too many recommendations, but since the subject is the viewpoint of a game and fish commissioner, then perhaps you people will get from my talk the importance of the job you are doing in the management of our wildlife resources as seen by your own commissioner.

Pardon me for using my home state as an example, but this is the one I have had the opportunity to observe.

Forty-two years ago a group of Arkansas sportsmen went before the Arkansas legislature and secured the passage of a law forming the first Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. The first commission served without any appropriation from the legislature. The necessary funds to organize the commission were donated by the sportsmen; however, two years later the legislature did appropriate money enough to employ a secretary and five game wardens. It also passed some laws to regulate the harvest of certain game and a license to hunt certain game. Under the control of the legislature more wardens were appointed each two years until a total of seventy-five was appointed, this being one for each county of the state.

From the time the commission was formed until 1944 when Amendment No. 35 was passed by the people of Arkansas as a part of the Constitution of our State, the commission was operated under the direction of each administration. Members of the commission, and in most cases, personnel changed with each administration. In spite of these changes, each administration made progress in our wildlife program. Amendment No. 35 called for the appointment of seven members, one from each Congressional District, and the eighth member being the head of the Zoology Department of the University of Arkansas, so now each member is appointed for a term of seven years.

Since the enactment of Amendment No. 35, game warden jobs have changed only for misconduct, political activities and failing to do the job. In the past the game warden job was strictly an enforcement problem, and our wardens have done an excellent job, this being possible by the use of the two-way radio system, but as time passes, we realize the need of other additional training for our conservation officers.

We consider the training of the conservation officers as one of the most important needs of the Game and Fish Commission. To secure the maximum results it is our belief that the qualifications should call for a degree in biology. Today our qualifications are that they have at least a high school education, be between the ages of twenty-five and forty, and be able to pass a standard physical examination. If the standard of this department is to be raised, then we must raise the standards of the requirements of our conservation officers.

Don't misunderstand me when I say "must have a degree in biology" that I consider this as a qualification for the job as conservation officer, but being a conservation officer he would be able to put into operation any technical program in his county that should be adopted by the commission. He should also be able to collect and write local interest articles for the radio news and newspaper publications of his county. He should be able to make public addresses before the schools and civic clubs of his community and, above all, he should be a first-class salesman to sell the people of his county on the hunting and fishing program. Understand, I would not advise that this change apply to the present personnel, but with the retirements of our present game wardens, I would suggest that the qualification standards be raised for future game wardens, as stated before.

I feel that if we are to secure the most benefits from our county conservation officer who in the past has been mostly a law enforcement officer, he must take on the duty of educating the people in the schools and counties and to sell

the recreation of hunting and fishing, and that each county will need a full-time conservation officer.

The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission is inaugurating what we call the seven-year plan. We are asking the Arkansas legislature to increase the price of a resident hunting or fishing license from \$1.50 to \$2.50. The \$1.00 will be earmarked for the purchase of land, developing areas and lakes, and the maintenance of these areas and lakes. With this additional revenue along with what we already have available, Arkansas can furnish excellent hunting and fishing to all the people within a reasonable driving distance of their home. It is the opinion of our commission that when the hunting areas and fishing lakes are developed well, we will no longer have a problem of finance, that more and more of our people will enjoy hunting and fishing, thereby eliminating the problem of finances.

I realize that we must consider what we can do with the force that we have at present. For several years now we have conducted schools for our game wardens that we may bring them up-to-date on modern methods of conservation, and this plan has been very successful; however, we still realize the benefits of higher education. A few weeks ago I made a talk to our game wardens while attending the Wardens' School and suggested the following plan:

First, that each warden secure a map of his county, and with different colored crayon so mark the different hunting areas and lakes and designate the different features of these lakes and areas on the map, that he should sit down and study and outline a definite work program as to how often he should visit or patrol the different areas, and to use this map as a guide in directing his daily activities.

Second, that he would install a card system and keep same current on the area of informers on violations committed in the different areas, and be sure to build this system each week.

Third, secure a list of license dealers in his county, and be sure that each has a fair knowledge of the game and fish laws, visit each dealer at least twice each month and secure the names and addresses of people buying hunting and fishing licenses, that the warden should, if at all possible, check as many of the people buying these licenses as possible. He should welcome them and advise them of the better places to hunt and fish in his county.

Fourth, that he should take notice daily of the happenings in his county and report this news to his local newspaper and radio station. Although he may not be able to write the news himself, I feel sure that the newspaper editor and the radio stations will be glad to do this for him.

Fifth, a game warden must be boss of his county. The quality of work done in his county is the same as the people think of the Game and Fish Commission; in fact, to his people he is the Game and Fish Commission. If he permits game law violations to continue or game to be destroyed, then this will reflect on the Game and Fish Commission as a whole. Our troubles come from the counties where we have the weaker game wardens, so each game warden is solely responsible to the Game and Fish Commission for his county.

With the motivation of our industries, with the increase in the population, our people are going to have a great deal more time for recreation, and this is a challenge to the Game and Fish Commission of our country to see that these recreational facilities are furnished our people within a reasonable driving distance of their home. With this in mind, the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission has purchased in the last six years more than 100,000 acres of land in eleven different areas in our state.

Today game and fish recreation is the fifth industry in our state. The tourist industry as a whole is the second largest industry in our state, so the challenge to the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission is great, and our commission feels that we will be able to furnish the recreational facilities needed for our people.

Thank you.