

S.P.O.R.T.

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You often hear the old axiom "There is nothing new under the sun." Missouri's S.P.O.R.T. program is certainly no exception. It is, in fact, bits and pieces of what we consider the best of many state and provincial programs, coupled with extensive grass roots research and a measure of creativity thrown in.

When we made the decision to seriously consider the development of such a program, our first step was to initiate an investigation to ascertain the problems. To this end, the Department employed Mr. John Hall. John came to us with considerable experience as an outdoor writer with a vested interest in the sports of hunting and fishing. He spent many hours contacting landowners, farm organizations and rural townspeople. We listened to them and questioned them in an effort to identify the real problems.

While John was researching the problems, we moved ahead with what was anticipated to be a simple task, that of defining the term "Ethics." However, the more we pursued our quarry, the more elusive it became. You must keep in mind that what is ethical to one person may not necessarily be ethical to another and to agree on a simple definition that we could all accept and live with was not an easy task. We finally settled on:

"Conduct is the out-of-doors based on a set of moral values as to what is right and wrong behavior."

How many of you think of yourselves as ethical, outdoor users? Ask yourself the following questions. Have you ever thrown something out of a car window or in any way littered? Built a fire and used a ring of stones? Hung a gas lantern on a tree while camping? Picked up or petted baby wildlife? Walked off a trail while hiking? Entered on private property without securing permission? Washed dishes or taken a bath in a stream or lake? Been noisy or rowdy in a public campground, picnic area or other outdoor public environment? Crowded in on someone else's fishing spot? Ditched a tent? Shot at waterfowl in excess of 40 yards overhead? These were some of the questions that crossed our minds when attempting to define ethics. As you can readily see, a simple "yes" or "no" answer is dependent upon your personal interpretation of what is ethical or non-ethical behavior under a given set of circumstances.

DEVELOPING THE PROGRAM.

I would like to go back to an earlier statement and give credit to sources from which we drew when developing Missouri's S.P.O.R.T. Program. These include N.R.A.'s H.O.W., Pennsylvania's Sportsmen Policing Our Ranks Together, the Kansas Youth Ethics Program and one of the earlier sportsmen/landowner-oriented efforts, Manitoba's RESPECT.

When John Hall completed his research, we began to piece together the information and it soon became apparent that although we are all quick to point an accusing finger at the hunter, he certainly does not stand alone in the eyes of the private landowner as the proverbial "thorn in his side." Those landowners interviewed were most emphatic that their problem comes as a result of participants in all outdoor-oriented sports. As we brought ourselves to admit that no group of outdoor users was exempt from acts of misconduct and that these transgressions were not only in the area of law violation, it became obvious that we would need to take a broad approach when developing Missouri's program if we were to be successful in addressing the complete problem. Thus, Sportsmen

Policing Our Ranks Together, as it had been known in Pennsylvania, in Missouri became Sportsmen Protecting Our Resources Together, with the emphasis on ethical behavior instead of enforcement.

We chose a three-phase approach with 2 major objectives in mind: To teach our citizenry the principles of good outdoor conduct and encourage them to set a good example; and to encourage all outdoor users to put pressure on those individuals who are not behaving properly and report those that are acting illegally.

Phase I consists of general distribution of informational packets. Anyone interested in the program, regardless of their reason or purpose, is supplied a packet of information. These packets contain a bumper sticker, a S.P.O.R.T. button, a card explaining the program, a brochure entitled "You're a Sportsman When" published by the National Shooting Sports Foundation, a flier conveying additional information, a pre-addressed post card that can be completed and returned to the Department indicating the sender's desire to participate in an ethics course, and a pocket card for listing the name and telephone number of the local Conservation Agent. On the reverse side is a place for the carrier to sign his or her name under the following statement:

I'm a sport:

- S upport conservation law enforcement.
- P resent a good image by your conduct.
- O ffenders must be approached and warned.
- R espect public and private property.
- T ogether we can preserve our outdoor heritage.

To date, 50,000 of these packets have been distributed and we are presently putting together another 25,000.

We also distribute S.P.O.R.T. buttons at special affairs; sport shows, fairs, summer camps, etc.

Phase II is comprised of a promotional slide/sound show that was developed with a 2-fold purpose in mind. First, to promote participation in the program and to take advantage of the numerous opportunities Department personnel have to appear before various civic groups and organizations. Secondly, it is used as an introduction to the 3-hour Outdoor Ethics Class.

Phase III, is the 3-hour "Outdoor Ethics Class." This is the heart of the program. The Department's enforcement staff and other field personnel have been trained as instructors. These employees in turn conduct the classes for our citizenry. Many classroom teachers from Missouri's schools are also requesting the Instructor training. An instructor's kit was developed. It contains all needed materials for teaching a class. The S.P.O.R.T. class can be taught separately or in combination with other programs such as Hunter Education.

PROMOTION

To promote the program, Joel Vance of the Department's Information Section staff wrote a 4-part news release that was distributed to approximately 1,200 outlets. Tom Troughton, Cinematographer for the Department, also a member of the Information staff, produced radio and T.V. public service announcements. Tom solicited the assistance of Marlin Perkins, host of Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom, and Harold Ensley, television personality from the Kansas City area. Articles about the program appeared in the Department's "Conservationist" magazine. S.P.O.R.T. posters were also made available.

Early feedback indicated significant use by classroom teachers. So, when the time came for our first reprint of the manual, we decided to make some changes. We changed the bumper sticker design and color, redesigned the S.P.O.R.T. button, developed an instructor packet, and made sweeping changes in the manual itself.

We have, for some time, been developing what are generally referred to as modules. A module is a self-contained unit of study that includes information on a given subject, lesson plans, activities, class exercises, tests, suggested visual aids and reference materials. Modules are being developed in numerous skill areas.

It was the module series that brought about the aforementioned feedback. The classroom teachers were quick to recognize the importance of including the S.P.O.R.T. materials in their outdoor education programs. Therefore, to accommodate their need we designed the S.P.O.R.T. manual in accordance with the established module format. Thus, S.P.O.R.T. became a valuable asset to our module series.

Finally, we come to our most recent addition to this program, The Activities Booklet. It contains activities for young citizens in grades K thru 12 and teaches good outdoor manners by employing the hands-on technique. It was designed to be used first and foremost by classroom teachers. However, it also has application with all youth organizations, summer camps, etc.

FUTURE PLANS

Measuring a change in attitude and behavior is extremely difficult, if not almost impossible. What affect tis program will have in Missouri remains to be seen. We realize that it will be a considerable period of time before we will be able to measure or determine its affect. We are only sure of one thing, that if we do nothing, nothing will change. Those citizens who have been exposed to S.P.O.R.T. are enthusiastic about it.

We also realize that a large number of those who thus far have participated in the program are probably already ethical users of the outdoors. To try and reach those who most need the information is going to be a difficult task. One approach that we are considering is to appeal to judges and prosecuting attorneys, asking that wildlife violators be compelled to attend S.P.O.R.T. ethics classes as a part of their sentence.

Missouri's S.P.O.R.T. Program has been truly a team effort. Virtually every division, section and unit of the Department has had a hand in its development and implementation. We have no intention of writing - 30 - on this project. We intend to be constantly improving it as long as their is a need for Sportsmen Protecting Our Resources Together.