

A. Willis Robertson Electronic Wildlife Library Project

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Abstract: A. Willis Robertson was a pioneer in the politics and administration of fish and wildlife resources in the United States. In 1926, Robertson, a lawyer and sportsman from Lexington, Virginia, took over the reins of the then 10-year-old Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. Robertson quickly moved to the national stage working with other wildlife professionals including Aldo Leopold. In 1933, Robertson was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives and eventually co-sponsored landmark legislation that changed the face of fish and wildlife management in the United States. In celebration of his accomplishments, several Virginia agencies and groups are embarking on a comprehensive project to chronicle and archive the estimated 18,000 pieces of correspondence written to and from Robertson while he was commissioner of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries from 1926–1932. These documents represent a rich, yet unexplored source of original material relating to the history of wildlife conservation and policy. This project will be implemented in three phases. The first will be to digitize and archive the Robertson correspondence collection. The second will be to develop a searchable electronic library from the collection. The third phase will further develop the Robertson Electronic Library to create educational materials to coincide with the 75th anniversary of the Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act in 2012. This effort will result in a resource for fisheries and wildlife biologists, sportsmen, administrators, and the public so they may improve actions and attitudes in fisheries and wildlife management through a better understanding of the roots of wildlife administration and policy.

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