

GENERAL SESSION

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It is my distinct pleasure to welcome you to the Thirteenth Annual Conference of the Southeastern Association of Game and Fish Commissioners. I sincerely hope that you will find this meeting a memorable one, not only for the high technical quality of the papers and discussions to be presented here, but also for the opportunities you will have to meet with your co-workers from other states and to enjoy some of the aspects of our Chesapeake Bay "land of pleasant living."

If we could stand at a far-off vantage point and take a past-present-future view of our wildlife management programs, we could see that, despite our admitted shortcomings and failures of the past and present, we have made, and are making noteworthy progress in many areas of our field. Our dimly lighted crystal ball shows us many interesting things ahead, and presents to us the challenge of coping with future problems of ever increasing complexity. I would like to discuss with you briefly this backward and forward looking appraisal of our profession.

Any detailed listing of specific past accomplishments in our Southeast section would, I am happy to say, be a lengthy one. To cite a few examples in a broad sense I believe will suffice to illustrate our forward progress.

First, this Conference itself is a fine example of one of our forward steps. The first meeting of this Association in 1947 can be considered a milestone in the wildlife management activity of our region. The benefits of these annual meetings are well known and widely disseminated. Wildlife societies, councils, and conferences such as this provide a vital medium of communication between our people. Many groups, such as this one, have come into existence during our own association with the wildlife profession. They provide for workers the opportunity to present and exchange their ideas and findings on a great variety of subjects. Duplicate research has been greatly eliminated due to an increased exchange of information. We are, in a sense, profiting from each others mistakes and successes, and as a result have saved greatly on time, effort, and expense.

Years ago wildlife management was largely a matter of protection carried out by law enforcement officers. It is to the credit of this devoted group of men that a spirit of public responsibility for our nation's wildlife resources arose. The modern wildlife conservation officer is not only capable in enforcement, he is also skilled in public relations and in educational programs. In addition, he assists in many phases of investigations and management.

The acceptance and growth of conservation agencies has been accelerated by the employment of men of professional caliber who are specialists in their chosen subject. The status of wildlife management as a profession has been raised to the high level of respect enjoyed by those in other learned fields with nearly comparable social and financial benefits.

Another well defined mark of our professional maturity is the general progressive thinking of key administrators who have demonstrated their willingness to base decisions upon scientific research and experience. The application of the knowledge gleaned from research programs is equally important as the research itself. Today's leaders have realized this and have developed their policies accordingly. For example, as a result of sound fact finding programs, many states have reviewed their harvest regulations applying to certain species of game and fish, and have revised or relaxed former restrictions to make them more compatible with present knowledge. As a result, more man days of sport, higher success rates, and increased harvests are now enjoyed by the paying sportsman.

In earlier years of wildlife management, good habitat was plentiful and most people had a casual attitude toward the "living space" required by game and fish. Later, as competition for the use of our land and water increased, we realized the need for a general study of habitat conditions and the subsequent

need for methods and techniques for improving what we had. Now, our land and water management programs are solidly founded on the food and cover requirements of the species to be benefited. It is now common knowledge that stocking game to achieve and maintain harvestable populations is far inferior to creating and maintaining proper food and cover conditions on the land. Through efforts in this direction, we have succeeded in building up the carrying capacity of our wildlife lands and have witnessed the return of harvestable surpluses of game in areas where populations were once seriously depleted.

As was the case of nearly all of our natural resources, public attitude was formerly one of cool indifference toward conservation or wise management. Today this is not nearly so true. It is fortunate that many thinking people and Congressional leaders realized that our wildlife, while it is a renewable resource, could also be an exhaustible one. Besides this they recognized that game and fish were of great national importance. This of course is plainly exemplified by the Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson Acts through which our State organizations receive a great deal of assistance. These measures, through their financial and technical help have in many ways advanced our state of development far beyond that which we could have achieved individually. Largely through Federal Aid, we have been supplementing the Federal Wildlife Refuge system in the Southeast with State-owned lands maintained as sanctuaries or as public shooting areas. We have thus established islands of inviolate wildlife habitat safe from the inroads of civilization throughout much of our heavily populated sections.

By these backward glances at the past two and one-half decades or so, we see a maturing profession resulting in a vigorous and progressive conservation movement. We have progressed because our leaders, administrators, and advisors have been open minded and they have had the ability to perceive changes occurring in human society. We have progressed because our technical people have been inquisitive and able to determine to some extent the complex ecological relationships of game and fish. We have progressed because we have had to do just that in order to satisfy the needs and wishes of a more enlightened and concerned public.

Today our position is more favorable than ever before. We know in many cases what our goals are and how to reach some of them. Our public is more interested and cooperative than ever before and generally willing to progress with us. But while we may take pride in our present status, we must not forget that the present is of very short duration. Tomorrow and next week are the future and they are almost here. We will be working in the critical future before many of you have returned to your homes this week. We must begin immediately to consider carefully where we are going from here and what we must do to keep abreast of our rapidly changing social, economic, and land use conditions. I would like to mention a few things, without much elaboration, which may be considered as guides for our future conduct and endeavor.

First and of utmost importance, we must continue to pursue a vigorous program of land and water acquisition. Competition for the use of available land will become tremendous as our population continues to expand. Tomorrow will be too late to save some of our wildlife habitat for future generations. We must do this now and do it as hard as we can.

In order to maintain our rate of progress our basic and applied research and experimental management must be continued and expanded. We should realize that not all research will pay immediate dividends, but that all sincere objective research is worthwhile, and negative findings are often as important as positive results.

There must be a joining together of groups whose basic philosophies are parallel but do not converge on the overall goal of wise multiple-use management. Compromise must often be employed to reach decisions and harmonious cooperation for the benefit of the greatest numbers.

Future demands on the nation's available water supplies make it imperative that wildlife be adequately represented and spoken for in long-range planning for the use of this resource. Any program of watershed development could contain opportunities for us to be left outside the door, or inside gaining an

important consideration for wildlife. We must be alert for either possibility and govern our actions accordingly.

As our population increases, we will find a larger share of our time and thought devoted to "people management", rather than to wildlife. Our public relations experts and biological staffs will have here a fertile field in which to develop a more successful sportsman through promotion and education on one hand and concentration management or other new techniques on the other.

Finally, we must strive to create sufficient interest in conservation among our young people in order to insure an adequate supply of trained wildlife workers in the future. We must be sure the necessary facilities for advanced learning are always present at sufficient numbers of our colleges and universities, and that curricula are maintained at high professional levels.

Each one of you could no doubt add much to this brief list. There is much to be done in every facet of wildlife management. We are challenged by the prospect of more people and increasing pressures on our resources. I am confident that this group of dedicated, thinking men will rise to that challenge and make as much or more progress in the next twenty-five years as has been done in the past.

REMARKS OF MAYOR J. HAROLD GRADY

Mr. Chairman, members of the Game and Fish Commissioners Association:

As Mayor of Baltimore, it is my very pleasant duty to welcome you to Baltimore for your Thirteenth Annual Convention.

While your daily work is conducted in areas far beyond the limits of large cities, there are tens of thousands of sportsmen in Baltimore and other large metropolitan centers who have the most intense interest in your activities.

In fact, I believe, the greatest support for conservation measures will frequently be found among city-dwelling sportsmen.

So, I know that I speak for a very large number of Baltimore's citizens when I say that your work here at this Convention will be followed with great interest.

On behalf of the City of Baltimore I extend a most cordial greeting and I hope you will return to enjoy our hospitality again in future years.

ADDRESS BY GOVERNOR J. MILLARD TAWES

It is a pleasure to me to welcome all of you to Maryland for this Thirteenth Annual Convention of the Southeastern Association of Game and Fish Commissioners. We are happy that you chose Baltimore for this 1959 meeting.

Our state has been called the southernmost of the northern states and the northernmost of the southern states, but its culture is dominantly southern and most of us here think of ourselves as southerners.

You are interested in hunting and fishing and in the preservation of wildlife, and so are we here in Maryland. I don't believe there is any spot in the country where you will find more eager hunters and more avid fishermen than you find right here.

We are very fortunate here, too, that nature has endowed us with an abundance of game and fish for the sportsmen.

Mr. Vaughn, the Director of our Department of Game and Inland Fish whom you have honored by electing him the president of your association, advises me that last year 4,596 deer were killed in Maryland. That is a pretty good record for a small state.