

THE FIRST TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF FEDERAL AID IN THE SOUTHEAST

By C. W. WATSON

My subject is "The First Twenty-five Years of Federal Aid in the Southeast". It has been my great pleasure to administer this program for the past 20 years in this Region, and to see how these activities have revolutionized the operations of our state fish and game departments.

But, before launching into the subject, I want to talk for a moment about a man who was the granddaddy of the South Carolina fish and game department. He would have loved to be with us here at the first meeting of the Southeastern Association Technical Sessions ever held in his native State. I'm sure he would be here with us today in spirit, since he can't be here in body. He died a year ago. And so, a word of appreciation for Alf Richardson. We called him "Chief". It seems fitting to acknowledge the dedicated efforts of a man who "broke the ice" in state wildlife work in South Carolina, and who for 46 years ran the department. He was a kind friend and a wise counselor.

This year we are celebrating the silver anniversary of the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act which President Roosevelt signed 25 years ago. It is familiarly known as the Pittman-Robertson (PR) Act from the names of the members of Congress who sponsored the legislation. It worked so well that, in 1950, Congress provided the same benefits for fisheries in the Federal Aid in Fish Restoration Act—the Dingell-Johnson (DJ) program. Both programs have enjoyed outstanding success nationally. In the Southeast, I have watched them grow from tentative, modest beginnings into really excellent accomplishments in research, land acquisition, and restoration of fish and game resources.

You understand the source of income for these activities to be federal excise taxes on sporting arms and ammunition for wildlife restoration, and a tax on sporting fishing tackle for the fisheries work.

For each program, the Secretary of the Interior annually allots proportionate amounts of the tax income to each state, based on the relative area of the state and the numbers of hunters or fishermen licensed.

These contributions have been very substantial. I will burden you with little in the realm of statistics, but a measure of the magnitude of the financing is interesting. Up to last July our Region—the 12 Southeastern States, plus Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands—received a total of \$51½ million for both programs. This is about one-fifth of the national figure. About \$41 million went to PR and about \$10 million to DJ.

Since the states usually claim the maximum of 75% reimbursement of project costs, the Federal Aid allotments have generated an overall fish and wildlife restoration financing of \$68 million. This, of course, includes both state and federal money. Let's see what results have come from this fiscal "blood transfusion"!

I will devote my attention mainly to the older program—that of the Pittman-Robertson wildlife activities. But, I do want to say that our states have done splendid things for the fisherman under the Dingell-Johnson program. They have built many lakes for public fishing and access facilities to bring the fisherman to hitherto inaccessible waters. They have developed impressive methods of fish population control, reducing species, such as gizzard shad, and even eliminating entire fish populations to replace them with desirable sport fish. The fishery research projects have been truly spectacular. The studies of trout in the cold tailwaters below deep reservoirs are impressive. Investigations into the function of the striped bass as a fresh-water, land-locked species are particularly interesting.

This brief recital of DJ accomplishments is quite inadequate. However, Mr. Hueske will discuss this program in the afternoon session today. So, to avoid "stealing his thunder", I'll pass on to the wildlife activities.

If we recall the work of our state fish and game departments before the PR funds became available, and contrast those conditions with the 1962 operations,

we see a world of improvement. Formerly, the activities were largely confined to enforcement of the fish and game laws. Usually, there was a quail hatchery, some fish hatchery activities, and sometimes an I. & E. section.

Generally, there was no game management program, no staff of trained biologists, no research into wildlife problems, no development of public hunting areas by land acquisition and habitat improvement, and no stocking with live-trapped wild animals. There just wasn't enough money left over to do these things, after the conventional activities of law enforcement, prevalent in those days, were taken care of. The Federal Aid funds filled this void.

The Early PR projects were quite varied, considering the youthful stage of the program. Land acquisition began promptly, and a few projects ran into large acreages. Witness Arkansas' Bayou Meto Area, Florida's Charlotte County Quail Area, and Tennessee's Catoosa Area. These states were then buying land in the range of \$3-\$7 per acre, or even lower.

Several states undertook detailed, state-wide inventories of wildlife resources and habitat conditions. These county-by-county reports later served well to orient game management activities. Research projects were set up to study areas of the time-honored superstition in game management. Factual data from these discredited stocking with pen-raised quail and relegated predator control to a minor role. It was hard to kill the rumor that the fox alone ate most of the quail. But, this subject could always be used to steam-up a sportsman's meeting that was bogging down.

Our states gradually built up staffs of trained biologists. Many outstanding men were developed via the Federal Aid route. Many of them were snapped-up by federal agencies. Frequently, those who remained in state employ became chiefs of game, assistant directors, or directors. Three of our state directors are former PR men.

Apparently, the mantle of Federal Aid regulations protected this technical staff. It has been very unusual for the biologists to be affected by changes in political administration. This in spite of the fact that our states recruited technical personnel far and wide. We have them from every section of the nation. Native sons predominate, but the dough has been liberally leavened by the yeast of imported talent.

One of the obvious needs, from the very beginning, was the restoration of the deer and the wild turkey. In very large areas, particularly in the piedmont and in the mountains, these game species had disappeared, due to habitat changes and harassment by hunters and by dogs. All of our states have very successfully restored deer and turkey, mostly by live-trapping and release, sometimes by purchase of animals from other states. Many deer were brought in from Wisconsin and from Texas.

These restocking jobs have brought great credit to our states in the eyes of the hunters. Many adult hunters had never seen a deer or a turkey before the restocking began in their neighborhoods. Sometimes the proprietary interest of the local folks became so intense that they were loathe to permit hunting of the animals when it became feasible.

Certainly, of all the ways in which our states have spent their Federal Aid money, none has greater sportsman appeal than the purchase of public hunting areas. And, if you will permit a bit more of statistics, I should like to say that, as of June 30, 1962, our states had purchased over 500,000 acres at a cost of a little over \$5 million. This averages \$10.58 per acre.

This acreage offers forest game hunting predominantly. However, where the state acquires hardwood bottomlands, as in Arkansas, a green-tree reservoir type of management is possible, serving waterfowl as well as deer, squirrels, and turkey. The Atlantic Coastal States have purchased sizeable chunks of marsh for waterfowl. Kentucky continues to buy fine duck habitat along the Ohio River. Considering the future pinch which we visualize on lands for public recreation, these Federal Aid land acquisition programs are most useful.

And, lastly, I come to research. Not that I rate it low—quite the contrary! It is indispensable. But, research is harder to "sell" to administrators than are the more obvious investments. This, in spite of the evidence that we live in a research-dominated era. Industry depends upon it for survival in the brutally

realistic competition for profits. To endure as a free people, our national defense must be research-oriented. Not so urgent, but likewise important, is the need to obtain, through research, the facts upon which to base intelligent wildlife management.

Therefore, it is to the everlasting credit of our states that they have subsidized a considerable number of sound research projects. A series of excellent publications have followed such investigations. The research projects have run the gamut from simple surveys of routine data to highly complex studies of basic problems. The research projects embraced waterfowl, doves, quail, turkey, squirrels, deer, boar, beaver, muskrat, and nutria. There were several studies of exotic birds—pheasants, coturnix, chukar, etc.

I am tempted to develop this subject of research accomplishments rather fully, because some of the most noteworthy achievements and lasting benefits have come from research projects. But, I shall be content to briefly describe three which are quite unique. All three have a feature in common in that they involve cooperative effort on the part of all, or most all, of the states in the Region.

First, were the Mourning Dove Investigations conducted by ten states from 1948-1956. Each state had its own individual study, but all states followed the same work plans, so that comparable results might be obtained region-wide. The Southeastern Association of Game and Fish Commissioners published the coordinated data in a bulletin in November 1957. Then, each participating state published its individual data separately. Altogether these findings established a basis for dove management.

Capitalizing further on cooperative effort, all 12 of our states, plus West Virginia, subsidize a Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study at the University of Georgia. There, at the School of Veterinary Medicine, Dr. Frank Hayes and his staff, under the sympathetic administration of Dean Walter Jones, has done a job of great value to all of our states and of high significance, especially in deer management. There is a constant flow of published material from this Study. The eminently successful White-tailed Deer Symposium of last winter was a product of this Study.

Our states' encouraging success in cooperative effort led them into another vital research area—that of statistics. It is increasingly evident that successful research in a great many instances requires statistical services. The design of the project must be statistically sound if the data are to be susceptible of statistical analysis. For these services our states have turned to the Institute of Statistics at the University of North Carolina at Raleigh. There, David Mason, Scotty Overton, and Don Hayne form a potent team which serves the states most competently in problems, not only of research, but also in treatment of administrative and operating data.

Finally, may I voice a word of high appreciation of the friendly and dedicated state directors who have made the work of the Southeastern Association markedly successful and with whom it has been a great pleasure to work!