

“EDUCATION...THE KEY”

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The late FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover said, “Conservation law enforcement is probably the most hazardous type of law enforcement in the United States today.”

Probably no other law enforcement agency sends its men into the field with so little formal training as do state conservation agencies.

For instance, most of the 14 Southeastern states do not require education above the high school level for conservation officers and these states do not have any basic requirements of training in conservation oriented fields or law enforcement.

Top state conservation officials are aware of the problem. Ever since conservation law enforcement became an important factor in our society, authorities have pointed up the need for better training of its enforcement officials.

Even with this limitation, conservation law enforcement generally attracts a higher caliber person than do most other enforcement agencies.

History has proved conservation officers to be an elite group of dedicated individuals who have a high regard for conservation and law enforcement. This includes an inborn respect for the rights and privileges of their fellow man. For while outdoor sportsmen are engaged in hunting and fishing, the conservation officer is usually out working even longer hours protecting their rights.

In Alabama, the turn-over rate of conservation enforcement officers is lower than that of any other enforcement agency. Also, the arrest-conviction ratio for wildlife law violator is higher than for any other enforcement group. This figure speaks for itself in attesting to the high-type individual who is attracted to the conservation enforcement profession and denotes agency support.

Even with this outstanding record, most authorities in the field agree there is a definite need for specialized training in conservation law enforcement. In fact, there is a great need for a specially designed conservation law enforcement school.

Such a school might be centrally located to serve an entire region of the United States—much like the FBI's training school Quantico, Virginia. This type of school could provide uniform training programs, including such essential courses as business management, self-defense, first aid, firearms safety, pursuit driving and biological sciences. Communication procedures and a course in basic law would also be essential parts of the curriculum. These are merely a few suggestive subjects for illustration.

Undoubtedly, with an increasing population, conservation law enforcement will become increasingly vital to our society. Today people flock to the woods in ever-increasing numbers, not only to fish and hunt but to camp, hike and just enjoy the outdoors. If anything, this trend toward outdoor recreation is likely to increase and its companion problems will fall directly onto the shoulders of conservation enforcement officials. Everything from woods burning to littering can be expected to come under the jurisdiction of the conservation law enforcement official.

During the last 10 years the sale of hunting and fishing licenses in Alabama has increased tremendously, although the population has not. Higher salaries, more leisure time, better transportation and easy access to game management areas all have contributed to this.

While the need for improved and more technical training has increased, the training of conservation officers in the Southeast has remained virtually the same. Effective action must be taken before the situation becomes worse. Even

with the employment of an increasing number of conservation enforcement officers this complex and rapidly changing society of our places a demand upon them that is greater than their training.

The only solution is education and only a joint effort of the several states can meet this pressing need.

RESEARCH NEEDS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT- SOME SUGGESTIONS

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Gentlemen, I am pleased to have been invited by Chief Tucker Brown to address this group of professionals who comprise an important part of the state game and fish agencies of the several southeastern states. Since I choose to present this paper subjectively, rather than in the traditional form of the scientific paper, perhaps I should offer some credentials. At present, I am a university professor of biology. Most of my time is spent supervising graduate studies relating to fisheries and game biology. I have also earned my living as a research game biologist and as a research fishery biologist in different southern states, and have had game and fish law enforcement duties. An important part of my formal education in wildlife conservation was received at a mid-western university. My chief interest has been and continues to be the preservation of public hunting and fishing, in part for the selfish reason that hunting and fishing has been a way of life for me for over 45 years. Therefore, what I have to say to you will be from the viewpoint of an outdoorsman; a hunter and fisherman who is professionally educated in the technology of animal population dynamics and who has been afield in the southern states often enough to be aware of some of the problems of conservation law enforcement.

The term, "research" has many connotations, and implies different things to different people. In its more sophisticated form, it implies a series of accurate measurements made on some variable in a system while the other variables are held constant. Inferences are then drawn, based upon the logic of mathematics, and some conclusion is reached. Research is often conducted to attempt to find facts that can be used to solve problems. Before research can be properly conducted, the problem must be defined as accurately as is possible, and this can be extremely difficult. One thing that scientific research absolutely demands is that bias, whether human or instrumental, be either measured or eliminated. Since wildlife conservation generally, and its law enforcement in particular, is largely influenced by a myriad of unmeasurable human biases, I think that a more realistic term to apply to the needs of law enforcement is "re-evaluation".

Before continuing, I wish to offer my definition of the major function of a state game and fish agency. That function is to provide certain species of animals (mammals, birds, fish, etc.) for the opportunity of periodic harvest by the licensed public, and that this harvest should be distributed among the licensees in an equitably practical manner. This definition implies general opportunity to harvest only, not assurance of harvest, but opportunity as free of administrative supervision as is biologically sound. This concept should be carefully considered by biologists as well as enforcement personnel. Perhaps my idea of the major function of a state game and fish agency will be viewed with disfavor, particularly with those who are concerned more with the psychological nuances of the public than they are with making game species available for those who wish to hunt and fish.