

EQUAL BILLING -- WILDLIFE IS A PROJECT PURPOSE

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I am specially honored to have been asked to participate in this annual meeting of the Wildlife Society. The Corps of Engineers has not been overly endeared in the hearts of wildlife specialists in the past -- and in all honesty, neither have wildlife enthusiasts always enjoyed high popularity with the Corps, on past occasions. But out of controversy, often comes understanding and appreciation for the other fellow's viewpoint. And that is where we seem to stand today. I am heartened by the encouraging, increasing frequency with which we are exchanging views and, more so, that by this process, there seems to be fewer instances where we cannot reach mutually acceptable agreement.

To begin with, today I would like to spell out some basic aspects of our planning program to provide you with a frame of reference.

The basic objective in the formulation of our plans is to provide the best use, or combination of uses, of water and related land resources to meet all foreseeable short and long term needs. The development and management of these resources are essential to the economic development and growth of the nation and the region. This is the charge given to us in Senate Document 97.

Most of you know that the purpose of project formulation as I have just outlined includes provisions for flood control, water supply, irrigation, navigation and at least seven other purposes. You also know that wildlife is one of these other authorized purposes. However, I have yet to see a project justified before Congress, based on wildlife benefits alone -- and I know of only one or two needed for other purposes, which have been irrevocably rejected for lack of wildlife benefits.

However, if wildlife is to be considered a purpose in project formulation,

or a possible reason to reject a project in order not to disrupt the existing wildlife, then I believe it must expect comparable analysis with other purposes and somehow be made to pay its own way. I am sure all of you have become acquainted with the Everglades conservation issue in Florida, where work by the Corps to prevent flood damage, save lives, and enable development to take place, has been alleged to cause a threat of drying up the land inhabited by the alligator and other aquatic population. When water, which you who live here in the west can recognize as worth millions of dollars for irrigation, was released to wet down the alligators again, the deer drowned -- and parenthetically, many of the deer were eaten by the alligators. This situation a year ago was given nationwide news coverage. However, from a factual standpoint there have been periods of alternating wet and dry naturally throughout the years in the Everglades, and both extremes killed wildlife -- so no new conditions were being created by this work. This was never admitted by the objectors to the project during the heat of public debate, and when mentioned, the fact was ignored. I am afraid too, though, that there may have been some failures to listen on the other side. My point is, that sensible understanding and willing coordination, by all entities concerned with the total problem could well have been the course to constructive progress, and a better service to our nation.

Historically, society has had the task of providing the basic necessities, food, clothing, and shelter for the people. Modern civilizations have still another social imperative -- an obligation continually to improve the living standards of all. To achieve these ends man develops, utilizes and consumes, at progressively increasing rates, the environment in which he evolved. Obviously it will be impossible for an ever increasing population to maintain those pristine conditions which existed on planet earth when man first made his appearance. Yet today, so highly do we value the environment in which our ancient ancestors lived (and sometimes struggled) that we are willing to pay a very high price to retain even vestigial remnants. For example, here in the United States, there is emerging an increasing willingness to forego substantial increases in the Nation's material wealth in order to preserve "wild rivers," to set aside large areas of wildlife preserves, and to make greater investments in outdoor recreation facilities; to insure that we shall not completely lose touch with nature. Most of us are perfectly willing that an appropriate proportion of the Nation's wealth be used to this end. The question we face as a public agency, of course, is how much is appropriate? How much can we afford? It seems to me that each generation has a duty to hand on to its children as much unspoiled land, water and air as may be preserved with minimum interruption to society's progress toward a decent level of living for all.

To gain fullest realization of these objectives, all elements of society

must cooperate in resource development. The protection of ecological and wildlife values require representation and consideration in water-resource development, just as do flood control, navigation, or other economic purposes. If the needed cooperation is to be effective, it must begin when the study begins. Accordingly, when we start a study, the first thing we do after funds are made available to the field, the District Engineer is to conduct a public hearing, in order to benefit by the views of all interested persons. This is something that is pretty well announced, but at times, pretty well unattended. But the people in an area because of ~~damage~~ or need, want something done -- a study has been authorized, funded and now we have to determine what they really want and how we can best meet the need -- up to now in the most economical manner. Therefore, the first action involved is a public hearing. I mention this pointedly because this is the basic point at which considerations pertaining to wildlife problems and objectives can be most specifically brought to our attention. There is a proposal to do something -- to alter the land -- and that is basically what we do -- alter the land. It is the goal of the District Engineer to collect all available pertinent facts of this land in order to arrive at the project formulation stage. I believe he can be especially helpful in injecting the realism of quantitative thinking into a subject which, up to now, has been discussed mostly on a philosophical basis. I realize that powerful psychological and political factors are involved, and that working within the framework of public opinion, it is not possible or even desirable to depend solely upon unilateral reason. Quantitative evaluation is therefore essential and it will help provide a rational basis for decisions. For wildlife there are two major sources of information -- the Federal and State Fish and Wildlife agencies, and the informed public.

We work very closely with the Fish and Wildlife agencies during the plan formulation stage. In fact, a large number of the fish and wildlife studies are carried on with funds provided by the Corps. Due to the inevitable lag in availability of funds, this is one of the areas in which there would be a distinct advantage to seeking Congressional action to appropriate money for fish and wildlife studies needed for our project studies, directly to the Fish and Wildlife Service rather than depending upon "hand-outs" from other agencies.

The advantage of having sufficient in-house money and staff to make necessary studies would be an opportunity to eliminate the guesses made as to the magnitude of the fish and wildlife resource, for all too often we must make judgements based on opinion rather than fact. Also, it may be possible to arrive at defensible figures of mitigation needs. For example, it is a matter of concern to the Corps when the fish and wildlife reports from a local or State agency specify, as necessary, water releases from a proposed project that exceed the natural flow before the project. -- Or that a downstream fish hatchery must be four times that proposed, and twice that

proposed by the Federal Fish and Wildlife agency.

Another advantage would be the opportunity to expand the consideration of alternative means of mitigation. Very few projects are completely negative. Under some situations it is possible to have temporary impairment of an environment (such as might occur for short periods during construction) and a portion of the local species might be destroyed. Usually, this results in large headlines and articles proclaiming the loss. Very seldom is the regenerative capacity of the area mentioned and the fact that this is a short term loss. Along these same lines, it is possible that a project will, in fact, destroy a part of a natural environment but, in turn, will create a condition where project lands will, in a few years, provide more than enough habitat to offset any loss, through either improved natural conditions, or with wise management practices. Other items which might be considered are downstream rehabilitation as a substitute for a hatchery, water quality and temperature control to compensate for upstream spawning beds or increasing the fish production in adjacent streams as a mitigative measure.

All of the above will require that the fish and wildlife agencies spend more time, manpower and money on their studies and emphasizes the need for these agencies to have their own funding in order to obtain more defensible mitigation measures.

As important as the above services by the fish and wildlife agencies are, there is an additional area of concern to me. This is the second of the two major sources of fish and wildlife information -- the untapped potential available in conservation organizations such as yours. Recently, I suggested to my staff an expanded action program aimed at overcoming this deficiency. The purpose is to increase the opportunity for conservation groups to present their views. Although the door has always been there, we are doubling our effort to reach out to these interested groups -- for we need and want your views -- even if they are only opinions -- we believe it is informed opinion and often factual.

These efforts and invitations cannot and will not bear fruit unless and until organizations such as yours come forward during the early planning efforts and make your desires known. Quite simply, it is an effort on the Corps' part to have all available information available upon which to make solid decisions. Because of the multitude of special interest groups it is difficult for the District Engineers to approach them all. Therefore, I believe it is incumbent upon each group to make the effort to write to him requesting that they be placed upon the mailing list of public notices. An attempt is made to include all interested people and organizations on these lists but as you can imagine, it is always possible to unintentionally overlook a few. The public notices are sent out whenever a study is

initiated, and prior to public hearings. It is at this time when it is important that all interested parties present or make available pertinent factual information concerning the project. It is a disservice to wait until a study has been completed, a plan formed, and then express objections.

Recently, we established a procedure where our efforts toward beautification, the planting of trees, shrubs, and grasses, are to be related to wildlife. In addition to considering natural beauty, shade, ground cover, and screening, the planning engineer must attempt, with the assistance of the public agencies, to determine those plants which can double as food and cover for birds and animals. This information is usually available for game animals and efforts are made to satisfy the need. However, we do run into some difficulty in urban areas and where we are looking at non-game birds and animals. As I mentioned earlier the Fish and Wildlife agencies are hard pressed for funds and personnel. This often precludes their being able to spend time making food and cover studies of the needs of song birds and small animals.

This lack of opportunity to develop all the facts, is one area where the members of conservation groups can be of welcome assistance. One, by contacting the District Engineer at the beginning of a study and offer to provide information to his staff. Two, make an effort to find out why the project has been demanded by the people living in the area, and try to understand the need. Three, make an inventory of affected fish and wildlife and their environmental requirements. Four, make this inventory available to the District Engineer at an early date. Five, in addition to gathering data of existing conditions, an effort should be made to understand the trends and changes that will take place in the natural community without the project. Will urbanization of the area eliminate, bit by bit, the natural habitat? Is it possible that the project may actually provide a means whereby the habitat necessary for survival of the animals might well be protected? Six, have a representative attend all public hearings and express the desires of your organization stating specifics, based on facts -- not vague generalities. Seven, do everything possible, individually and collectively to assist the public fish and wildlife agencies in their efforts, and Eight, bear in mind that most construction projects do not always have a 100% negative effect upon wildlife. If they did, coyotes would not be living in Los Angeles and Walt Disney could not have made his movie about them. Even so, it is possible at the early steps of planning to incorporate features that will be beneficial to fish and wildlife.

One important item that bears repeating, is that all project purposes shall be treated objectively, dispassionately and in as far as possible comparably, including cost allocation. Where dollar estimates of the value of fish and wildlife are not given, we need to have quantitative estimates in a form which we can convert to dollar terms by the methods used in

evaluating recreation and fish and wildlife generally. This pertains to losses as well as the costs to mitigate losses. In the event that fish and wildlife reports do not contain dollar amounts, the only possible solution is for Corps personnel to compute the amounts from the qualitative information given. In some very special cases intangible considerations such as the desirability of preserving an endangered species may warrant inclusion of mitigation features which are most costly than the nominal dollar value which readily can be assigned to the project -- in order to prevent induced damage which otherwise would not occur. It would be hard pressed to accept, for example, that the USBR's Sesepe project really would threaten the existence of the 48 condors that live in that vast area -- but if it does, then isn't there a possibility that some unique feature could be incorporated to protect them? These are unusual and special situations and will require a full description in qualitative terms.

There has been discussion in the past to the effect that it is not possible to adequately compare objective items such as concrete and steel with subjective items like natural beauty or the presence of a fish and wildlife resource. Within limited ranges this is true, providing we could define "beauty," as an example, in terms acceptable to all, or agree that all forms of fish or wildlife should be protected. However, when all aspects are considered, I believe you will find that there are items in the mitigation of the fish and wildlife resource that are objective; i.e., cost of land, price of water, cost of management structures, or research facilities. Conversely, there are many subjective items in flood control, water supply, irrigation, or power such as improved living conditions, protection of lives, improved health and safety. Therefore, I submit that we are not, as some people state, comparing apples and oranges, but comparing similar items in an effort to improve our nation's overall economic development and growth through comprehensive planning and development of our nation's land and water resources. What our real problem has been in the past is lack of communications. We haven't sought to understand one another enough. We must do more of it.

Before closing, I would like to make a comment about our streams. There are great and growing demands upon our streams as sources of industrial and municipal water supply, as a means of disposing of vast quantities of sewage and industrial wastes, as important avenues of foreign and domestic commerce, as great playgrounds, as hosts for fish and wildlife, and as a resource base for commercial fisheries. As the economic demands have been satisfied by the rivers, the natural environment has, of course, deteriorated and fish and wildlife problems have multiplied. Such problems lead us eventually to new concepts such as total stream flow regulation.

In summing up, I believe it appropriate to state that the Corps of

Engineers is positively pursuing the conservation of fish and wildlife resources in planning and developing our national resources. We are trying to work with nature, in satisfying the needs of that other animal "man", without jeopardizing the existence of the lesser mammals. We are convinced that coexistence is possible, and that the way to insure it is to seek mutual understanding of each others problems. Second, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the State Fish and Game Departments are contributors of basic knowledge of our studies. Third, we welcome factual information from conservation groups and individuals. We look forward to your group assisting us in planning for the wise use of the nation's natural resources.

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California is a big state, one of the biggest in the world. In fact you people here are the only people in the world who are going to have problems with water. We are going to be developing our resources and we need your help and support.

In this area of help, we are looking for people who are able to get some ideas from the State of New York. Because until recently, New York has some 300 years of experience in water resources. To my surprise, I found that you have had some 100 years of experience in water resources. The fact is that in the last 100 years, you have had some 100 years of experience in water resources. I say it to emphasize the fact that you have had some 100 years of experience in water resources.

Let's look at the two states.

New York has a population of 18,000,000. California has a population of 15,000,000.

New York has 32,000,000 acres of land. California has 160,000,000 acres of land.