

PUBLIC LANDS -- THE FUTURE FOR DEVELOPMENT AND USE

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Your panel for today is entitled "Resource Development and Use" and you have asked me to speak on the role of "Public Lands". I also note the theme for this annual meeting is "Wildlife's Future in Natural Resource Development". My conclusion, therefore, is that you would appreciate some appropriate remarks from me regarding the subject of the future of public lands and their relation to natural resource development, with some reference to wildlife. My first reaction is -- well, you have wisely restricted me to only thirty minutes to discuss this entire subject!!

First off, let us make sure we are communicating and understand each other. My remarks regarding "Public Lands" will be limited to the lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management. The agency administers in varying degrees these public domain lands throughout the west for their many and varied resources. Since these resources are inter-related and we are concerned with communicating, let's identify some of them:

Land Resources

Development sites (industry,
residential, R/W, etc.)
Grazing - habitat
Forests & forest products
Historical & natural sites
Parks, monuments, trails,
playgrounds
Recreation
Soils management
Open space

Water Resources

On-site uses - habitat
Off-site uses - power, agri-
culture, domestic
Pollutant management

Air Resources

Pollutants management

Mineral Resources

Saleable
Leaseable
Non-leaseable

As to the term "development", I assume we are referring to all forms of development; that is, road construction, housing expansion, mining explorations, range improvements, etc.

Now then--what does The Wildlife Society mean by the word "wildlife"? I referred to your Society's very good text (Mosby 1963:396) entitled, "Wildlife Investigational Techniques"; however, I note four different definitions with no agreement on any particular one. I believe it would be a very beneficial accomplishment if The Wildlife Society, which I understand is the only Nation-wide group representing this profession, would define the term "wildlife". It would surely help us all in communications.

For example, as a land administrator, I'm not too sure when we use the term wildlife if we include wild horses and the poisonous weed halogeton, both of which are abundant on public lands today. If I really knew what professional wildlifers mean by the term "wildlife", I would be in a better position to communicate with you on the subject I am concerned with on this panel.

As of June 1964, there were 15,616,779 acres of public lands in California and another 47,191,358 acres in Nevada, (U. S. Bureau of Land Mgmt. 1965), but you or I would have a hard time to go out into the field and actually spot where they are on the ground. This is a problem that has plagued the public in the past and still remains today.

Administration of these lands has been further complicated by the many laws, regulations and rules developed over the years in response to particular problems. Characteristically, old laws have remained on the books as new laws have been added which supplement, extend, and often times, conflict with previous enactments.

Congress became aware of this problem and passed two important laws in 1964. The first was the appointment of a Public Land Law Review Commission for the purpose of conducting a comprehensive review of the public land laws, and the rules and regulations promulgated thereunder, and to determine whether and to what extent revisions thereof are necessary.

Although slow in getting started, the Commission is well on its way now with 34 studies being considered for implementation. Of particular interest to this group was the awarding of a contract by the Commission last December for a study entitled, "Fish and Wildlife Resources on the Public Lands" to be directed by Dr. Gustav A. Swanson for the Colorado State University.

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Measure the importance of Federal Public Lands to fish and wildlife production and harvesting, including the economic contribution involved.
2. Describe the various intergovernmental relationships existing in the field of fish and wildlife management. Particular attention will be given to legal problems arising from divided Federal and State responsibilities over fish and wildlife matters and a review of the arrangements that have been developed to resolve them. Migratory bird treaties and treaties between the United States and Indian tribes governing Indian fishing rights also will be reviewed.
3. Identify the conflicts involved in the production and use of fish and wildlife resources with that of other resources, and vice versa.
4. Find out what restrictions exist for hunting and fishing on Federal public lands by virtue of official closure, enclosure by fencing, or private lands commanding access routes. Steps taken by Federal and State agencies to eliminate the restrictions will be examined.
5. Define the progress of Federal and State agencies in improving fish and wildlife habitat, and estimate the acreage of Federal range needing rehabilitation. The State and Federal effort will include all states except Alaska (similar data will be compiled in a study of public land laws of Alaska already under way by the University of Wisconsin); the rehabilitation data will be limited to the eleven western states.
6. Report of the acreage designated or acquired for fish and wildlife purposes in all states except Alaska, together with a description of the legal authority and procedures involved. Laws and practices governing public hunting and fishing on military reservations also will be reviewed.
7. Document the degree to which private lands are open to the public for hunting and fishing, and describe efforts being made to increase this acreage in order to permit clearer review of demand on public lands.

8. Determine the relationship of public land policies to commercial fisheries. How much of the industry is dependent upon anadromous fish which spawn in streams located upon or flowing through public lands?

The final conclusions from this study, which are due in December this year, will undoubtedly have far reaching effects on wildlife matters on public lands. It is encouraging to see the interest The Wildlife Society has taken by expressing its recommendations to this Commission. Your able Executive Secretary presented a highly professional position statement last month indicating that The Wildlife Society will stand and be counted among those recognizing their responsibility in the management of public lands and enhancement of our native wildlife.

The second significant Act passed by Congress in 1964 is entitled the Classification and Multiple Use Act. This Act authorizes and directs that certain lands exclusively administered by the Secretary of the Interior be classified in order to provide for their disposal or interim management under principles of multiple use and to produce a sustained yield of products and services, and for other purposes. This was truly a landmark in management for it set the wheel in motion to accomplish these points:

1. Authorized the Secretary to develop and promulgate regulations containing criteria by which he will determine which of the public lands administered through the Bureau of Land Management shall be disposed of or retained and managed.
2. Specifically required public hearings be held to identify needs basic to the development of proposed classifications. This is really important for prior to this action, the Bureau had only a few expressions from isolated segments of the general public as to how they would like to have their public lands managed. Apathy in the identification of specifics continues to be a problem in developing a sound, effective land management program.
3. Public lands, as needs are identified, are being classified for disposal by transfer to other Federal, State or local governments or sales to private sources. At the same time those public lands, where transfer to fulfill a need is not eminent or where public needs are best served through continued management on a long-range basis, are being classified for retention and management pending the identification of other needs or higher uses. I would like to emphasize that although these lands may be

classified for multiple use management today, they may be re-evaluated at any time in the future and if appropriate they may be reclassified for other uses based on identified needs.

4. Based upon this Act, Congress, for the first time, indicated that those public lands not disposed of were to be managed for many uses. Consequently, the Bureau received clear authority to implement multiple use management. This authority entails identification of those lands that will be retained together with the coordination of the various uses of these lands including land sales, mining exploration, oil drilling, forest harvest, wild fire prevention or suppression, watershed management, livestock forage production, wildlife habitat management, recreation opportunities, and many other uses. Multiple use management infers proper use of all these demands - truly a challenge to any administrator or manager when it comes to actual practices in the field.

Our overall program guide to management centers on two major issues. First, we must eliminate resource damage. This may necessitate management decisions requiring reduction of domestic and feral animal use on public lands, as one example. Second, we must develop management plans (livestock, wildlife, and recreation) designed to sustain or increase resource production. We know the public lands have the potential to satisfy many user groups, but it will take a lot of good judgement to determine the best programs to serve the interest of the majority of people and resources involved.

How wildlife fits into this multiple use scheme is probably the paramount question most of you are wondering about right now. Since the Bureau has just recently been given authority to implement its responsibilities in wildlife habitat management, increased emphasis will be evident along the following specific lines:

- A. Keep up-to-date on inventory of all wildlife habitat with immediate identification of all habitat utilized by rare and endangered species.
- B. Initiate habitat studies to document condition and trend characteristics.
- C. Review all land sales, exchanges, and/or withdrawals, from the standpoint of wildlife welfare.
- D. Initiate habitat management plans on important or critical wildlife areas and coordinate wildlife needs in other resource management plans accomplished.

- E. Identify areas of access problems whereby the public is restricted to public lands for wildlife recreation use.
- F. Complete an inventory of all needed habitat improvements in coordination with other wildlife agencies.
- G. Expose the Bureau's wildlife habitat management program to public groups.

Priorities for work efforts will be given to areas classified for multiple use management, habitats in poor or declining condition, regions where sport fishing and hunting demands exceed the supply, and areas where harvest regulations are adequate and game resources are properly utilized. It should here become apparent to all that in order to actually practice good wildlife management on public lands, there has to be a strong, smooth cooperative approach at both the State and Federal Government levels. One without the other makes for an inefficient operation. Working together, though, should result in good habitat conditions for maximum wildlife production for specie preservation, harvest, or enhancement.

Probably some of you are wondering why I am not dwelling on Bureau wildlife habitat management accomplishments. Yes, I can report to you that this year in Nevada we were planting 1,500 acres of forage, 25 water developments, and constructing 8 miles of protection fence for the specific purpose of wildlife habitat management.

This is all good, but, what concerns me much more is our public responsibility to good land ethics and management. This is not new to you, for your father of wildlife management, Aldo Leopold (1948), stressed this time and time again. If we take care of our lands right in the first place, the resources will take care of themselves. This, we in the Bureau recognize.

Public land management is now being tested. Public hearings are being held. Congress wants to know what the public wants from its lands. Consequently, the future development and use of the public lands rests heavily on the expression the public today will give regarding its needs, wants, and desires.

Your recommendations are essential and they had better be made in a timely manner and at the right places, for these are your lands -- the public lands.

Literature Cited

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