

## **"WAIT A MINUTE"**

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As a member of the Commission of Environmental Protection for the State of Nevada, your conference theme "Progress and the Environment" is a subject matter I have been spending a great deal of time on for the past six months. As a member of our Commission, with both regulatory and enforcement powers, to the extent that through your deliberations you can improve the environment and also affect either favorably or adversely the lives of thousands of people, causes one to consider very carefully proposals made and even take a second look at some of our previous actions and recommendations. I have therefore entitled my talk "Wait a Minute."

Thirty-seven years ago, when I first became involved professionally in wildlife management, we were preaching control of the environment, ecology and so forth. Most people didn't know what we were talking about and cared less. For many years it seemed like nobody but a handful of wildlife biologists gave a hoot about what was happening to our streams in the way of pollution and to our forests, to our range lands and to our clean air.

Little by little people started to understand and become concerned, and then all of a sudden individuals that didn't even know the meaning of the word ecology or environment became experts overnight; grabbed the ball and ran with it, while the wildlife professionals were left standing with their mouths open. Most were so elated that at last this great American public had finally awakened to the problems that they were willing to relax and let the "big boys" run with the ball, and run with the ball they did -- in every direction.

Emotionalism is fine to get something started, but control of our environment is much too delicately balanced to turn it over to the Johnnie Come Lately and expect him to understand the many ramifications that wildlifers have learned through trial and error and basic research over the past 30 to 40 years.

Now, I say to you; "Wait a minute" -- let's not go overboard on ecology in our zeal to clean up the environment. To do so we may find ourselves in even deeper problems than before. Now don't take me wrong, our nation is in trouble, and drastic steps must be taken to correct many of our mistakes but premature and emotionally inspired action will not solve the problem. When we try to solve environmental problems more quickly than our technology permits, not only do we increase the costs suddenly and sharply, but we increase the number of false steps that we take along the way. The incomplete state of our knowledge leads us into pitfalls that can't be foreseen.

Let me cite a few examples: Detergent phosphates, one of the nation's common washday ingredients, were singled out at an early date as one of the top ten pollutants of our lakes and rivers. State and local governments all over the country rushed to make laws that would ban their sale. Now it appears that alternate chemicals can be even more dangerous than phosphates themselves. With the sudden desire to do something many laws were passed that were not justified in the light of additional facts. It is now reported that far more phosphorous is pouring into the nation's waters from human waste, runoff from agricultural fertilizers and natural soil erosion than from detergents. Elimination of all phosphates from detergents would make little difference in the amount now flowing into our streams and lakes.

In the meantime, the Surgeon General has advised State and local governments to reconsider banning of phosphates, and the Environmental Protection Agency has announced that it would recommend spending \$500 million to improve sewage treatment plants to prevent phosphates -- from all sources -- from flowing into affected waters.

So today we are back roughly where we started a couple of years ago. My purpose in citing this example is not to defend phosphates, but merely a way of saying, "Wait a minute," before we rush pell-mell into immediate solutions to such vital problems. Shouldn't we take time to weigh all the factors?

Power Plants: This nation's need for more electric power is rapidly outrunning our capacity to generate it. We now have the ability to generate 340 million kilowatts, and it's estimated that by 1980 we'll need 665 million kilowatts. 1980 is only 8 years away. This nation's economy is based on oil and electricity. Who will be the first to suffer when there isn't sufficient electricity to operate our sewage disposal plants and the many industries we depend on for our very existence.

When we look at the neon lights in Las Vegas we all realize that a great deal of electricity is wasted, and conservation of kilowatts are needed, but our estimated needs for 1980 are double our present use. Where will it come from? With our population of today I'm sure we cannot turn the clock back and live like our forefathers did, even if we wanted to. Our teeming cities would soon starve on horse and buggy transportation.

One Industry Towns: A growing number of small communities face economic death due to newly imposed environmental-protection controls which threaten to close down their single sustaining industry. Where will these people go and what will they eat? Do we want our people to survive as millions are now surviving in the Far East? Existing industries should be forced to clean up all pollution to the highest degree possible based on economics and available technology. New industry can be required to meet the highest standards possible known to man, but in our zeal to clean up all pollution let's not be a part of destroying that which we are trying to protect.

Alaska Pipeline: This nation runs on oil, yet many are saying, "Let's not build the Alaska pipeline because of the possible adverse consequences to the environment." These developments are not completed in a day, a year or several years. When this nation runs out of oil we're in big trouble. Isn't it time someone said, "wait a minute," we recognize the environmental risks, but let's work them out one step at a time and then proceed forward. The results of an economic catastrophe to this nation might result in far more environmental degradation than all the pipelines in the world.

Emission Standards: Our transportation equipment today is probably our greatest source of pollution, and certainly tougher emission standards for automobiles, airplanes, trucks and busses should be demanded, but did you ever consider what would happen if this great mass of people had to return to the horse and buggy or walk any place they wanted to go? You think we have pollution now -- you "ain't" seen nothing yet.

Many popular magazines today are stating that predator control must go and that all animals have a right to live. I'll be the first to admit that in the past predator control got carried away with its own justification for existence, but let's not throw the baby out with the bath water. In years past too many young biologists, in order to get their name in print, reported on very short term and incomplete research projects concluding that predators had no adverse effect on wildlife. Without evaluation of the source and the conditions under which the studies were performed, many individuals jumped on the bandwagon and condemned all predator control. This philosophy also adds ammunition to the effort of growing cults

endeavoring to outlaw all hunting. Just remember, man is the biggest predator of all, and if hunting is to remain a part of our way of life, then man must give wildlife assistance where and when needed.

A recent news release from Oregon reported a small antelope herd in Umatilla County established by the Game Commission nearly three years ago had almost doubled in numbers in a single summer following a coyote control program to reduce predation on newborn kids. This program was initiated after two seasons during which only one young animal survived the summer months. After removing 146 coyotes from the 20,000 acre enclosure thirteen young antelope produced by nine does remained in the herd the following year.

Utah Fish and Game Department also recently reported that a ten year study indicated that bobcats had taken 46% of the antelope kids produced during the study period.

Many people are shouting to the roof tops that the coyote and bobcat are endangered species and unless drastic steps are taken to protect them, they will soon be extinct. These scare tactics have no basis in fact. In fact, since some of the pressure has been relaxed under the Federal control program, coyote populations in Nevada have increased many times over. Sheepmen in the State report that unless some relief is in sight many will be forced out of business. Forty years ago sheepmen used every means at their command to protect their flocks, and poison bait stations were indiscriminately scattered over western range lands with no controls. Land baits, with a strychnine pellet concealed inside, were even dropped from the air with the expectation that the summer sun would melt the lard making it safe for the herder's dogs to again work the area during the grazing season.

As our population increased and more and more people used our public range lands it was realized that stricter supervision must be exercised over predator control programs. Also, as the price of furs dropped, fewer and fewer private trappers made this their life work. To relieve the predator pressure on livestock and game the predator and rodent control division of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife was expanded to take up the slack left when the private fur trapper moved out. In spite of all the control measures man could use against predators both coyotes and bobcats have held their own and even extended their ranges in many areas.

I am the first to admit that in many places predator control was over emphasized, but now through emotion, rather than good management practices, improved predator control is being forced out of the picture and you will again see ranchers turning to individual control measures to protect their flocks. We have already arrested one rancher this winter who had killed seven deer and poisoned their carcasses in order to control coyotes on his sheep range. It cost him a \$500 fine, but with dressed lamb selling at 86 cents a pound, it won't take very many sheep saved from destruction by predators to make up the difference.

Again, don't misunderstand what I am trying to say. A certain number of predators is highly beneficial, but too many coyotes or bobcats are just as harmful as too many deer. If deer are destroying property we are obligated to assist in mitigating the damage. As wildlife managers, should predators as part of our wildlife heritage, be any different? So again, I say -- stop -- "let's wait a minute" and see if we are going in the right direction when we advocate outlawing all predator control.

For many years conservationists preached conservation of our national resources. We pleaded with ranchers to not overgraze range lands with domestic livestock while we tried to obtain an adequate harvest of our wildlife and maintain adequate forage to sustain deer herds through the winter. Now that both sportsmen and rancher have generally seen the light and are going down the same road together, along come thousands of emotional people to save the wild feral horse. Federal legislation has been passed which will probably do more damage to our public ranges than any one other piece of legislation enacted in my lifetime. Proponents of the wildhorse legislation will probably rise up in indignant wrath at such a statement and claim that adequate provisions are stipulated in the bill for proper management. Having had many years experience with wild horses and burros I feel certain that time will prove it impossible to manage them under the law as written and protect our vast public range lands from serious damage. They are headed down the same path as the sacred cows of India with little regard to the productive capacity of the range. Again, this is one of the best examples of

conservation through emotion rather than sound resource management. I personally love the wild horse, and feel very strongly there is a place for them on our public lands, but the tools provided for management are far from adequate.

In closing, may I quote Dr. Philip Handler, President of the National Academy of Science, who said "My special plea is that we do not, out of combination of emotional zeal and ecological ignorance, hastily substitute environmental tragedy for existing environmental deterioration. Let's not replace known devils with insufficiently understood unknown devils."

All we seek in these considerations is a balancing of values, a weighing of proper priorities, a measuring of the social and economic costs against benefits. If we approach our problems in that spirit, we can meet our ecological needs, clean up the country, and do so without undue economic risks for anyone -- all within the framework of continued technological progress.

Let's go all out in our fight against pollution -- but let us do so realistically and without too much emotion.

