



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

For Release to PM's, FEBRUARY 28, 1958

STATEMENT BY SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR FRED A. SEATON BEFORE THE NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION, ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI, FEBRUARY 28, 1958

Speaking at Stanford University in 1903, on the subject of natural resources, President Theodore Roosevelt exhorted the nation to leave "to future generations a heritage...unimpaired, and if possible even improved." That clarion call to conservation action continues to echo in our own days.

In the fifty-five intervening years, conservation practice--by private citizens, State agencies, and the Federal Government--has greatly increased.

Moreover, there is today unprecedented citizen interest in the management of this Nation's natural resources, particularly those under Federal jurisdiction.

Only with such public interest--and understanding and action--can we hope for effective legislative and administrative results. Organizations such as yours have long realized that fact. To you and to them is rightfully due a major share of the credit for the progress made in the proper husbanding of our natural resources.

As Secretary of the Interior, I owe much to all of you. Many times your representatives have spent long hours with me discussing difficult and complex problems, benefitting me with information and counsel. Time and again members of local units of your organizations and the others have written or spoken to me their opinions and suggestions. Let me assure you here and now of my gratitude.

A multitude of major Federal laws, old and new, today govern the use of publicly owned resources.

Many of them are complex. Sections of some of them appear to collide with sections of others. Nevertheless, they do set the framework within which officials of the Executive Branch must act. And taken together, these varied pieces of legislation are inspiring evidence of a people's determination to deal as prudently and wisely as they can with the bounty nature has conferred upon them. On that, all of us can surely agree.

For public lands, we have major legislation dating from 1801.

For water, we have similar legislation dating from the Reclamation Act of 1902.

For minerals, we have the basic Mining Law of 1872 and its successors; for timber, the Forest Reservation Act of 1891 and subsequent enactments; and for grazing, the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934.

The development of our unparalleled national parks system has taken place under a variety of general laws since 1906. A major victory in this area was the launching in 1956, of the Eisenhower Administration's program to improve the national park system, widely known as "MISSION 66".

Major legislation for fish and wildlife is, as you know, relatively recent. It includes the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, the Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929, the all-important 1934 "Duck-Stamp" Act, the 1934 Coordination Act with its 1946 amendments, the Pittman-Robertson Act of 1937, and the Dingell-Johnson Act of 1950. These measures came into being largely through the efforts of many of you, your predecessors, and your associates. Similar efforts received a long-due reward in 1956, when the Fish and Wildlife Act was passed by the Congress. Then we were able to create, in the Department of the Interior, the Office of Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife. Through the cooperation of many people, in and out of the Government, this historic step forward was taken.

Despite the progress made, I believe this Nation's natural resources program could still be better balanced. Administratively we are making every effort in our national planning to protect fish and wildlife, recreation, and associated values. Nevertheless, if these are to receive full protection, they must have appropriate additional recognition in Federal law. Of that I am convinced. As Secretary of the Interior, I shall continue to do everything possible to further the enactment of such legislation.

Consider the real and justifiable need for it.

The demands on our recreational and wildlife resources are growing with incredible intensity. Cities, roadways, and industrial plants, for example, are devouring land at an annual rate of almost a million acres--an area larger than the State of Rhode Island.

Moreover, our country's population is growing at a fantastic rate; by 1968 it may reach two hundred million.

In the past few years the Nation has accomplished much to meet the challenges posed by such trends.

Since 1953, the Government has added almost 50,000 acres to its Federal wildlife refuges.

In the current fiscal year, the Department of the Interior is investing nearly \$57 million in sport fisheries and wildlife programs--almost 60 percent more than the corresponding amount for fiscal year 1953.

In the past two years alone the Department has had nearly a fivefold increase in its investment in river basin studies. One of our immediate problems is the proposal to erect a dam at the Nez Perce site in Idaho, on the Snake River just below its confluence with the Salmon. Until there is conclusive evidence that such a structure would not do irreparable damage to the great anadromous fish runs up the Salmon River, I must oppose it. I have no choice.

The Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson funds are now providing twenty-one and a half million dollars to the States for sport fisheries and wildlife programs--the largest annual amount in history.

In the Havasu Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Arizona, water is now being diverted from the Colorado River into the Topock Marsh, ending the stagnation due to Federal dredging operations which began in 1949. This is helping to restore the area to its former excellence as a wintering ground for migratory waterfowl.

The Department of the Interior and the Department of the Army last year reached an agreement, acceptable to conservationists, by which a buffer strip was made available to Fort Sill in the southern part of the Wichita Wildlife Refuge. This agreement eliminated a serious threat to the refuge and its intended purposes. The Department has no intention of reducing the effectiveness of this outstanding wildlife area by opening more of its acreage to military use. Of that I can assure you.

The Congress has recently passed the so-called Military Land Withdrawals Bill, H. R. 5538--which makes applicable on military lands the fishing, trapping and hunting laws of the States and territories in which they are located. It also stipulates no military withdrawal of more than 5,000 acres can be made without consent of the Congress. The Department of the Interior has wholeheartedly supported this legislation.

Much has been accomplished. There is still much to do.

It is time to make constructive amendments to the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act of 1946. That is a legislative must. And the sooner it is done, the better.

The Department of the Interior is now working with other Federal agencies on just such amendments, which would legally require that greater consideration be given to fish and wildlife conservation in the planning of Federal water resources projects. In brief, the proposed amendments will go beyond the present legal protection against damage to fish and wildlife values. They will actually require the enhancement of these values. We have made good progress toward getting agreement with other Federal agencies. As soon as that job is done, I shall at once submit the proposals to the Congress and strongly urge their enactment.

Second, we urgently need legislation to establish a National Outdoor Recreational Resources Review Commission. The Administration is now enthusiastically supporting that before the Congress. It will lay a base for application of recreational resource criteria to include wilderness and associated values in any comprehensive survey of this Nation's lands. The sooner the Commission can get on with its job, the better.

Because of the impending termination of Federal trusteeship over the lands of the Klamath Indians, we need legislation which will continue the sustained-yield management of the Forest and preserve the Marsh as a wildlife area. The Administration has sponsored such legislation. The Marsh, purchased by the Department of

the Interior, would become a Wildlife Refuge. The Forest, kept intact, would continue in perpetuity to produce timber on a sustained-yield basis; to help prevent floods; and to protect the migratory waterfowl, deer, and other wildlife which now find refuge within it.

There came to my desk yesterday a recommendation for the solution of the Klamath-Tule Lake problem. Because of its complexity, it has required extensive and sympathetic study by my immediate staff and by the Assistant Secretary for Water and Power and the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife. Upon my return, I shall resume work on this problem myself. We will make every effort to announce a decision within the next few weeks.

Fourth, we need special legislation enacted in this session to authorize metalliferous mining by lease or permit only for the proper protection of the proposed new Arctic Game Range.

As you know, I have taken steps to set aside this nine million-acre area in northeast Alaska for the protection of grizzly and polar bears, Dall sheep, wolverines, caribou, and migratory waterfowl. This single addition to the Nation's wildlife system will send the acreage of Federal wildlife lands soaring to a new record total.

Fifth, we need to make certain that nothing defeats the purpose of the new regulations which govern oil and gas leasing on Federal wildlife lands.

As you know, these regulations provide that on Federal wildlife refuges, there will be no leasing except when governmental oil reserves underlying such lands are threatened by drainage because of nearby drilling. On the game ranges of the United States, the Bureau of Land Management and the Fish and Wildlife Service will together determine which areas should be opened to leasing and drilling. Similar regulations will also apply to the Federal-State cooperative lands and the wildlife areas in Alaska. The approval of the Secretary of the Interior must be obtained in any case.

Recently a congressional question has been raised about the validity of these new Departmental regulations. I have been informed hearings will be scheduled on this subject. Let me assure you, that I stand ready to defend my action.

Finally, we need, even more than ever before, continued and strengthened public support for all constructive conservation measures.

The half-century behind us is rich in legislative and administrative achievement in the field of Federal natural resources management, conservation, use and development.

Even so, we must continue to forge ahead.

I propose to you that each one of us launch a sort of personal "Mission 2000", not for one resource but for all of them. With the utmost diligence, let us continue to work together to assure that the latter part of this twentieth century, as the first, will be an era of outstanding brilliance in American conservation.

x x x