

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

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news release

REMARKS OF SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR THOMAS S. KLEPPE
BEFORE THE WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF STATE FISH & GAME COMMISSIONERS
SUN VALLEY, IDAHO, JULY 27, 1976

You and I are extremely fortunate people. Most of us were raised close to the land--loving such activities as hunting and fishing--enjoying everything about the great outdoors.

I don't suppose that any boy or girl ever says to his parents: "When I grow up I want to be Secretary of the Interior." This was not, as I recall, the burning ambition I had as a boy.

But nothing pleases me more than to have an opportunity to work with you ladies and gentlemen in shepherding the activities and the resources which are so dear to us and to the nation.

It is no secret that as Secretary of the Interior during the past nine and one-half months I have been much occupied with our energy resources. The energy problems facing our country are critical and have demanded immediate attention. Some of our resource development programs had become stalled, and I was determined to get them moving again. These were my orders from President Ford, and they are moving again.

It is not that I place less importance on my responsibilities to the wildlife and recreational aspects of the Department. Much of my work regarding energy development has concerned how we can protect the environment, the scenic beauty, the wildlife, the recreational values, and yet extract the natural resources we desperately need.

A healthy and abundant wildlife population is a key element in our quality of life. A measure of how well we are doing in protecting our total environment.

Time and again I have repeated my firm belief that we do not have to sacrifice. That we must not sacrifice our quality of life to maintain our standard of living.

In keeping with this, the Department of the Interior has developed a systematic approach to make energy and land use decisions which incorporate input from other agencies, private enterprise, and the public. Thus, the methods of protecting our environment, including our fish and wildlife resources, is not just a litany of cliches and platitudes, but a process through which you can participate and help us make the right decision. I invite and urge you to do so and assist us in our commitment to a clean and wholesome environment in the process of energy resource development.

When I came on board at Interior, the Department already was well on the way to implementing a solid program for cooperative State-Federal wildlife management. This program was worked out in 1970 in cooperation with you ladies and gentlemen and with the help of other state officials around the country involved in wildlife preservation and management.

This policy declaration, covering some 540 million acres of Interior-managed public lands, encourages a maximum degree of cooperation between Federal and State employees who are carrying out their respective roles on Federal lands.

This has been a division of responsibility which has worked out very well, I heartily endorse the policy, and I have continued to pursue this course.

Most of you are concerned about the recent Supreme Court decision on the Wild Horse and Burro Act and how it impacts our traditional roles and relationships. I share that concern.

That ruling by unanimous opinion of the Supreme Court held that the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act is constitutional. There is little to discuss about that issue other than to say we should all help to implement the Act and to obtain needed amendments to make it workable.

Basically, the decision stated that Congress has the authority, under the Constitution, to regulate and protect the wildlife on Federal public lands, State laws notwithstanding. So the question is not whether Congress can delegate wildlife functions to Federal agencies, but whether it should.

To address the wildlife issue per se, let me state that it is not our intent to request Congress for any legislation that would in anyway provide authority for Federal regulation of wildlife species on the public lands. The States have and will continue to set hunting, fishing, and trapping laws and regulations which apply on those land, except as modified by Federal legislation.

One tool we need to enhance the Department's ability to manage fish and wildlife habitats on national resource lands is the approval of an Organic Act for the Bureau of Land Management.

A major step in our cooperative efforts was made recently with the signing of agreements with 11 states for the administration of endangered species programs. These actions will provide about \$2 million in Federal funds for State programs.

This is part of a new era in the endangered species programs. Emphasis, action, and money are now at the local level where the problems exist and the responsibilities are paramount. The entire job cannot be done from Washington or a Federal regional office. Common sense dictates that most of the recovery action must take place in each State where the species exist.

Congress was wise in providing for such cooperative agreements when it passed the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

The signing of the 11 agreements culminates a two-year effort by the involved States to align their State laws and regulations with requirements of the 1973 Federal law. The States also had to design and establish field programs for endangered animals. This has not been easy, and I applaud the diligent efforts of California, Colorado, New Mexico and Washington. We hope more states are on the way.

Under the agreements, many States will expand conservation programs. The Interior Department can provide financial assistance under provisions of Federal aid statutes, particularly the Endangered Species Act. As part of the agreements, Federal and State law enforcement officers will cooperate in the detection, apprehension, and prosecution of violators of the Federal and State laws which apply.

Before I leave the subject of the Endangered Species Act, let me clarify our position on one aspect of the program. Recent efforts by Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service to determine critical habitats for endangered and threatened species have sparked a great deal of controversy and concern throughout the United States. This is particularly true of the grizzly bear here in the West.

Much of the problems result from a lack of understanding of what critical habitat determinations mean and what their impacts are on other land uses.

Simply put, critical habitat is the air, land and/or water area that is necessary for a species to survive and recover. It is by no means an "iron curtain" that cuts off all human activity in an area inhabited by endangered or threatened species.

Critical habitats are determined in accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973. This section applies only to Federal agencies by charging them to ensure that actions authorized, funded, or carried out by them do not jeopardize the continued existence of listed species or destroy or adversely modify their critical habitats.

Federal actions in critical habitat that would not destroy or adversely modify that habitat could be carried out. State and private actions are not affected.

It is important that critical habitats be determined so that the many Federal agencies which manage lands or administer programs within these habitats will know where the areas are and be able to plan their actions and carry them out in ways that are consistent with Section 7, and more important, compatible with the needs of these vanishing species.

Now I want to mention another opportunity for the States to gain a greater voice in Federal fish and wildlife habitat and species management programs. This is available under the Sikes Act.

The primary significance of the Sikes Act is that Congress has recognized the critical need for aggressive protection and improvement programs for our western wildlife habitat resources.

While the Department of the Interior has not sought appropriations under authority of the Sikes Act, funding has been made available from other sources and progress has been made.

A major turning point is near for vastly improved habitat management by the Bureau of Land Management on national resource lands.

I can say this because of the following four points:

1. To date, all 11 Western States have established specific Memoranda of Understanding with the BLM for cooperative conservation and rehabilitation programs in implementing this key wildlife legislation.

2. The policies have been set by Congress through passage of the Act. We, as the administrative arm, are now developing specific regulations for the Sikes Act programs.

3. Specifically included in these developing regulations are simplified procedures for cooperative study and improvement programs.

4. Programs being developed include traditional big game range rehabilitation in Oregon and Utah and water developments in Arizona and Colorado. Here in Idaho, working with the State Fish and Game Director we have initiated an entirely new program. This involves the protection and development of isolated tracts of national resource land through the farming of selected crops for pheasants and other wildlife species.

Having laid the foundation, we are more optimistic for congressional funding of specific Sikes Act programs. Needless to say, your support in this effort is crucial.

Another matter of vital interest to many of you is range management. Our effort has been accelerated through the development of the allotment management planning and system environmental statements. As with any new effort, there are problems. It is no easy task to find equitable tradeoffs between livestock, horses and burros, and wildlife in terms of forage allocations and habitat. New knowledge and cooperative management are needed to reach acceptable goals.

In this regard, it is important that each of you assert your advocacy role for wildlife resources through direct input into the development of the range management program. Increased wildlife considerations must and will be included in the development of the Bureau's range management program. It is your responsibility to identify these objectives and provisions. It is our responsibility to integrate them into the program.

Let's turn for a few minutes to another important aspect of the Federal-State relationship. The establishing of annual waterfowl hunting regulations. This procedure gathers in the very best knowledge and expertise in field, and in recent years the public has been given an increasing role. Next week, on August 5th, we are holding waterfowl regulations hearings.

We will listen to all the experts and all the spokesmen for various groups before making any decisions.

Without the cooperation of the States, the national migratory bird program simply would not work. For example, in law enforcement we have fewer than 200 Federal special agents in the field. Several thousand State law enforcement officers help us. As a result, we process an average of 6,500 Migratory Bird Treaty Act violations each year.

Our studies on waterfowl populations and our surveys of breeding and nesting grounds, which are so vital to the regulation-setting process, could not be accomplished without the excellent cooperation from all the States.

State universities across the nation are ably assisting the Federal government through their wildlife research programs. Without the discoveries made by these experts, we would still be back in the dark ages of waterfowl management.

There is yet another vital aspect of waterfowl management that is now coming to the fore as a crucial test of Federal-State cooperation. This is the setting of rules on the use of steel shot for waterfowl hunting in areas where lead poisoning is a problem.

This autumn we will require steel shot for waterfowl hunting in certain counties in nine States along the Atlantic Flyway.

Next year, the 1977-78 hunting season, the Fish and Wildlife Service will propose that steel shot be used in other major waterfowl hunting areas in both the Atlantic and Mississippi Flyways.

I bring this up because we are moving your way, and we will be asking for your cooperation in defining what areas in the West should be covered by the requirement.

We started slowly with this program because there is a limited availability of steel ammunition at this time. Approximately 2½ million rounds will be required for an average autumn of hunting in the nine highly hunted locales in the East.

Consultation between the Service and the States is necessary to define the areas and focus the program more exactly on the appropriate major waterfowl habitat units -- county boundaries, unfortunately, will not always be satisfactory.

I would hope that I have made it clear today that the Department of the Interior is not interested in playing "Big Brother". We want to work with and for the States, not dictate to them.

There is one more controversial item I want to mention before closing. That is our animal damage control program.

Our primary objective is a balanced approach that gives equal attention to the protection of the environment and to the management of animals that cause **significant** problems as determined by biological, social and economic considerations.

To achieve these objectives, the Department encourages State wildlife management agencies or other pertinent State agencies to assume operational responsibility for predator control programs.

The proposed Federal Animal Damage Control Act of 1973 was intended to transfer to the States the operational animal damage management responsibility for **resident** species.

Since this proposed bill was not enacted, the Service has begun negotiating to transfer the operational predator control programs to the States under existing authority.

The State of Washington has entered into such an agreement with our Fish and Wildlife Service.

As an incentive, these agreements will include provisions for Federal grants-in-aid. The Service also will initiate training programs for State personnel and will intensify technical assistance and extension efforts.

One of the major tasks we have jointly in terms of public education is to get across the point that predators like game species have to be managed in a professional, rational manner. In today's crowded and highly complex world, virtually every resource -- animal, vegetable and mineral -- must be carefully managed.

Wildlife species cannot be just "left alone." To leave wildlife alone without professional management has proven to be catastrophic.

And the management of resources does not occur in a vacuum. It occurs in what has become a highly charged atmosphere of diverse and demanding constituencies.

Although I am an action person who enjoys doing rather than watching, it is no mystery why many people find grace and beauty in a flock of geese on the rise, and never have to fire a shot. Likewise, I can appreciate why some people who never have seen a caribou, and probably never will, are upset by misleading stories that the Alaska pipeline will endanger the species or has already driven caribou to the brink of extinction.

We have a new and growing constituency out there. No longer do we serve just those who hunt and fish, We serve those who have been made aware of the importance of a balanced ecology to the welfare of all mankind. We serve those who, although they may never get closer to the outdoors than sleeping with a window open at night, feel that all creatures have a right to exist.

Perhaps the greatest challenge that Federal, State and private wildlife organizations face is recognition of the change in constituency and in the attitude of the American people concerning wildlife management.

We should welcome this broadening of constituency, even though it does at times complicate our work.

We must renew our efforts to work together -- State and Federal agencies -- to increase public knowledge of the benefits of professional management of our wildlife. And we must continually strive to win public support for the sound practices and programs which are essential in maintaining our vital wildlife resources.

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