



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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REMARKS OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY ROSS LEFFLER BEFORE LEAGUE OF OHIO SPORTSMEN AT COLUMBUS, OHIO, MARCH 13, 1958

We meet tonight to celebrate the golden anniversary of the League of Ohio Sportsmen and the centennial of the birth of an American President, Theodore Roosevelt, whose vision and influence first awakened this Nation to its responsibility to preserve for future generations our rich, natural resource heritage.

You have every right to be very proud of the long record of the League in the continuing campaign for the cause of conservation. Keep the torch burning.

Tonight we can look back over those 50 years and find we have made great conservation progress. Unfortunately, looking back and resting on past laurels are not enough to meet tomorrow's pressing demands. We face a challenging future. We must prepare ourselves to look courageously ahead and act boldly and positively to defeat the problems that the future will bring us.

No greater inspiration can we have for such a crusade than the memory of Teddy Roosevelt. If there ever was a man who was a symbol of youth, vigor, honesty, courage, adventure, dramatic action, and eternal fire, it was this great American who among all his other capabilities knew and understood the out-of-doors and who also did something about preserving the opportunity for others to enjoy it.

The record of his achievements in the fields of forestry, wildlife management, preservation of unique areas, outdoor recreation, and of land and water management is long and star-studded. As President, he fought for and brought about conservation advances beyond anything anyone had previously ever dreamed.

In the field of forestry, he reorganized and consolidated the work of the Government. He transformed the Bureau of Forestry into the Forest Service and centered the work in the Department of Agriculture. He called the first National Forestry Conference in 1905. While he was President, more than 148 million acres were added to the national forests. All the other administrations combined have not equalled that record.

To many people when he was alive, T. R. was best known in a wildlife role as a hunter of big game. That's not surprising in light of the publicity his gunning trips attracted. However, the march of time has revealed he made many lasting contributions, the importance of which is growing steadily more apparent to succeeding generations. His vigorous administrative actions of a half century ago clearly were a beneficial influence on the course of wildlife management at a most critical period for it.

The great wildlife refuge system we have today is a product of his initiative. The first of all of our Federal wildlife refuges was established by him on Pelican Island in Florida in 1903. Each year thereafter he added reservations and bird refuges to the new system. In 1905, he established the Wichita Mountains refuge about which we have heard so much in recent years. One of the refuges established in 1908 was Bison Range in Montana, which did much to save this many-fabled creature of the western plains from extinction.

The estimated 66 million people who today enjoy watching wildlife, nature photography, camping, and other forms of outdoor recreation are indebted to Theodore Roosevelt for some of the opportunities to enjoy these forms of recreation which are now offered by our National Park System. Here are some of the important park areas established during his administration: Crater Lake National Park, Mesa Verde National Park, Lassen Volcanic National Park, and Grand Canyon National Park.

But T. R. wasn't satisfied with just meeting these recreational needs. He took great interest in the Antiquities Act which was passed in 1906. This is the law which made it possible for a president to set aside as national monuments and protect from exploitation unique and historic areas controlled by the government. As soon as he had this authority, he rapidly employed it to preserve for posterity a great variety of unique areas--caves, fossil sites, cliff dwellings, **samples** of erosion phenomena, unique scenic areas, wildlife areas of special significance and some wooded areas too small for national parks but too important to be left unprotected. The Petrified Forest of Arizona and Natural Bridge in Utah are two of the better known unique areas preserved by this form of action.

The conservation policies of the administration of Theodore Roosevelt recognize the inter-relationships of the resources of soil, water, forest, fish and wildlife. No segment of it was neglected. In the soil and water management field he signed into law in 1902 the Reclamation Act which launched government handling of land and water problems in the rapidly developing West. He immediately inaugurated projects to bring water to areas without it, and to develop hydroelectric power to meet local needs in this area of vast public domain. In 1907, recognizing the significance of this program, he raised the Reclamation Service to an independent agency of the Department of the Interior.

One of the last important actions of this great conservationist president was the first conference of governors which he called in 1908 to inventory the Nation's natural resources and to dramatize conservation as a national policy. It led to the establishment of conservation agencies in many States lacking them and to the strengthening of such units in those States which had them.

All these achievements did not come to pass simply because T. R. was interested in hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation. To the contrary, he saw clearly that man's very existence is dependent upon the wise use of water, soil, and vegetative cover. These were his words in this respect in a message to the Congress about wasteful practices:

"What has thus happened in northern China, what has happened in Central Asia, in Palestine, in North Africa, in parts of the Mediterranean countries of Europe will surely happen in our country if we do not exercise that wise forethought which should be one of the chief marks of any people calling itself civilized."

He also said: "When the soil is gone, men must go, and the process does not take long."

Those words are just as true today as they were 50 years ago. They should continually remind us that the advances we seek for fish and wildlife cannot be considered separately but must be treated as a part of a broad program for wise natural resource use to insure a happy, healthy, and wealthy America in the future.

I'd like to add this further thought: Teamwork is the secret of success in the conservation effort. We believe in and we are practicing the full partnership approach with other government agencies and the States in the fish and wildlife field. Our efforts also are closely coordinated with the private organizations concerned with our work. There has to be close cooperation all the way from the Federal Government down to the local level of all of the various conservation clubs.

Yes, truly great progress was achieved under the leadership of T. R. in that golden dawn for conservation a half century ago. It took a dynamic individual in high office to bring this about.

Now, 50 years after Theodore Roosevelt, we again have a champion for conservation cast in the true Theodore Roosevelt mold. That man is Secretary of the Interior Fred A. Seaton. Already, under his able leadership, a series of striking new conservation gains have been recorded which clearly indicate that another bright new era in resource management has dawned for our country.

Let's look at the conservation record which has been achieved in the short time he has headed this important Department. Speaking from first-hand knowledge, I'll call attention only to those things which have taken place since he asked me to become his Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife in January of last year and which relate to just that field.

Turning back only a week, I call attention first to the momentous new proposal of the Department to earmark for land acquisition all revenues from duck stamps except the relatively small amount involved in printing and distributing them. The acquisitions these funds will make possible will insure the preservation of the waterfowl areas needed by the Federal Government to maintain this rich resource for succeeding generations.

For some time conservation groups have been unhappy about the relatively small portion of duck stamp funds going into acquisition. Over the years, the bulk of it has been used for refuge operation and development, waterfowl investigations and enforcement, etc. Now all this money would go to sharply accelerate the purchase

of critical wetlands areas. At the same time, conforming to a recommendation of the International Association of Game, Fish and Conservation Commissioners, the revenues would be increased by raising the duck stamp price to \$3. Present restrictions governing the operation of the refuges also would be liberalized to permit the opening of 40 percent of those areas to hunting.

You good people on the conservation firing line will be happy to learn that this new plan would make over 60 million dollars available for this desperately needed refuge system expansion in the next ten years and permit a 50 percent increase in our holdings in this category. This action, I'm convinced, will be the most important development in this field since Teddy Roosevelt established the first wildlife refuge in 1903.

To speed the acquisition--and this will be more and more important as an accelerated program gets underway--the Migratory Bird Commission recently approved a revision of procedure which permits advance blanket approval of over-all projects with guidelines for purchase prices rather than slow, tedious individual purchase agreement approvals.

In the Theodore Roosevelt tradition of maintaining the integrity of public lands and preserving valuable resources, Secretary Seaton by direct personal action this winter brought about the revision of the oil and gas leasing regulations of the Department so that wildlife refuges are completely protected and such operations can be carried out on game ranges and cooperative wildlife areas only in the places designated as not essential to wildlife and then only under special conditions which remove or reduce detrimental effects. This is another achievement hailed by the forces of conservation.

The T. R. pattern of forthright action to save important areas for posterity was repeated early this year by our Secretary when he directed the withdrawal of approximately nine million acres of irreplaceable unique wilderness on the Arctic frontier in Alaska. By this action, future generations are given the opportunity to enjoy in its natural form, unaltered by the hand of man, one of the most unique areas in the northern hemisphere. Never before has there been a single action of the scope of this sweeping withdrawal for the Arctic Wildlife Range. Isn't this just the way T. R. would have done it if he were here today? You bet it is, and all of us should be thankful.

We also are proud of the way an agreement was reached last year with the Department of Defense to maintain the integrity of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge which T. R. himself established. This action, limiting army use to a small part of the area without jeopardizing the primary purposes of the refuge, allayed the mounting concern which had been felt by groups such as yours when there appeared to be a threat to the future of this important wildlife area which annually attracts 900,000 visitors. Speaking of visitors, I'd like to report that the total of the visitors to our refuges last year rose to another new record--more than 8,600,000 men, women and children.

Another significant action was the appointment of career people to head the new bureaus in the United States Fish and Wildlife Service which was reorganized as directed by the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956. There has been a continuous process of promoting dedicated career conservationists to the various staff jobs which were set up to operate the expanded program.

Although your groups think principally of recreational activities in the jurisdiction of the Service's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, the work of the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries is also of great importance in the development of wise use of our natural resources. There are several achievements in this field of interest to you. The Commercial Fisheries program is being decentralized to improve local service and a regional office established for the Great Lakes-Central area in Ann Arbor, Michigan. There also has been notable progress in the development of a new chemical agent for the control of the lamprey eel in the Great Lakes.

As Secretary Seaton has said, we must think a generation ahead in resource management if we are to attain conservation objectives. We're now applying that kind of forward-looking treatment to our planning to meet future needs. Fifty years ago our population numbered under 90 million. Ten years hence, it is expected we will reach 200 million. The problems are multiplying equally.

On this matter of planning for the future, there are two approaches. The easy way is just to recommend expansion of current activities. To me, this would be like trying to move into space by lengthening the propellers on airplanes. We must apply new knowledge and establish priorities which will guide our actions in the most urgent channels if we are to make real progress. Otherwise we will diffuse our efforts and defeat our aims. I call this second pattern the realistic way.

We prefer the realistic way. As a result, you have seen forthcoming from the Fish and Wildlife Service no haphazard, more-of-the-same plan for the future, conceived in haste and to be repented in leisure later. Nor will there be. To the contrary, there has been a laborious operation of check and double-check of the many ideas advanced. In this respect, the task force of career people who were assigned to this operation did an outstanding job of cataloging the various needs and possible ways to meet them. This has been an invaluable tool to guide the development of current programs under reorganization. Now the various proposals are being given priorities for the future, and latitude to bring in changing patterns called for by new knowledge as it is acquired. These are most important actions. When they are completed and the final product successfully stands the test of a critical review which determines it to be a realistic, practical blueprint for our Federal fish and wildlife future, we will pass it along to everyone interested as another conservation achievement of which we are proud.

In the meantime, our current fish and wildlife program is moving ahead without delay and--as must be obvious by the record I've recited tonight--making conservation history.

When the spirit of T. R. looks down from the happy hunting grounds and sees the way things now are on the conservation scene, you can be sure that famous smile is once more flashing.

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