

KNOWLEDGE BASE



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Knowledge is Power

Scientia potentia est. Widely attributed to Sir Francis Bacon, this simple statement, “Knowledge is power,” is as true today as ever. The more we understand something, the better we can explain it, critique it,

champion it, and defend it when required to do so.

That certainly applies to the principles and doctrine that underlie wildlife management, conservation, and the hunting heritage in the U.S. and Canada. The North American Model arose from the great conservation movement of the last century. I say “arose from” because the concept of the model came relatively late in the scheme of things, long after North America’s wildlife resources had been pulled from their downward spiral and placed on a path of recovery and sustainable management. The term, “North American Model of Wildlife Conservation” was coined by B&C Professional Member Dr. Valerius Geist in the 1995 book *Wildlife Conservation Policy*, co-authored with the late Dr. Ian McTaggart Cowan (also a B&C Member). It conveyed the idea that the North American approach to wildlife management is not only unique in the world, but can be defined as a set of principles that account for the past and current successes of wildlife conservation in the U.S. and Canada. The model is based on the seven following principles, often called “pillars,” that give rise to the policies, laws, approaches, and practices comprising wildlife management.

Becoming knowledgeable on the North American Model just got easier, thanks to a new Wildlife Society technical review on the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation.

The technical review was thoroughly researched by a team of experts that included six Boone and Crockett Club Professional Members: John Organ, Val Geist, Shane Mahoney, Steve Williams, Paul Krausman, and Ron Regan.

- 1. Wildlife resources are a public trust.** This principle establishes that nobody owns wildlife. Rather, these resources are held in trust by government for the benefit of present and future generations.
- 2. Markets for game are eliminated.** It was unregulated and unsustainable market-hunting that brought many wildlife species to the brink. Prohibiting the sale of meat and animal parts was an essential step to turn things around.
- 3. Allocation of wildlife is by law.** As the public trustee, government regulates the management and use of wildlife through laws and regulations.
- 4. Wildlife can only be killed for a legitimate purpose.** Killing for frivolous reasons and wanton waste of wildlife are unacceptable.
- 5. Wildlife is considered an international resource.** Treaties and other forms of cooperation are essential for the conservation of species that migrate across borders.
- 6. Science is the proper tool to discharge wildlife policy.** It is necessary and proper that policies, regulations, and management affecting wildlife are informed by science.
- 7. Democracy of hunting is standard.** The right to hunt is available to all, regardless of social or economic status or other privileges.

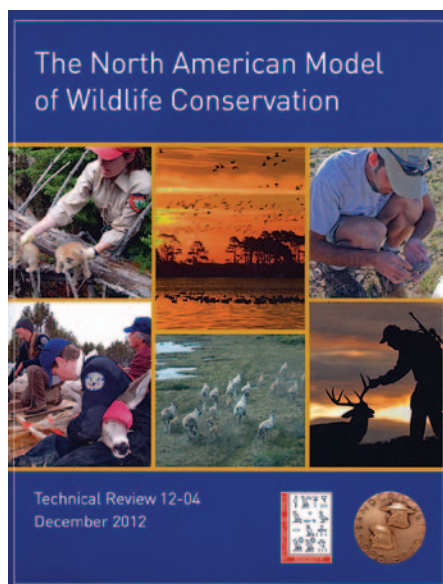
These principles are so familiar to all North American hunters that we tend to take them for granted. We shouldn’t be complacent, however; as some of the principles, and the model overall, are under threat from various sources. In my last column (*Fair Chase*, Winter 2012), I talked about efforts of the intensive deer-breeding industry to remove deer from the public trust in some states. As well, it’s a good thing to examine the principles to see whether adjustments might be warranted to strengthen the model overall. For example, would relaxing principle 2 (no commercial trade of wildlife) provide more options for managing over-abundant wildlife species?

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The Wildlife Society grants permission to make single copies of its technical reviews for noncommercial purposes. You may download a copy at wildlife.org/TechnicalReview, or go to bookstore.wildlife.org to purchase printed copies. Now is the time to strengthen your understanding of the pillars that support the wildlife resources and hunting privileges that we all care so much about.

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The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation

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