

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Robert Model
President
Boone and Crockett Club

Tackling Controversy Head On

As we begin 2004, there are concerns about the issues that the Boone and Crockett Club should address. It is important to step back, now and then, and ask fundamen-

tal questions about the roles the Club should or should not play. At last year's strategic planning meeting, there was a thorough discussion about central issues affecting the Club and the hunter-conservation community. After much soul searching and debate, it was agreed that there were controversial issues emerging that we needed to take head on. At the same time, we knew that it was critical to stand fast on the Club's "foundations" for which the Club is best known and widely respected.

We proudly continue to keep the trophy records of native North American big game taken in fair chase. Through those efforts, we have been recognized and became respected for the ethics and morals that we hold up for the guidance of the hunting fraternity. We have a conservation agenda that focuses on conservation education. We promote retention of opportunities for future generations of Americans to embrace and practice fair chase hunting.

At the end of the 19th century, the Club was largely responsible for ensuring

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that the big game populations of North America were not eradicated nor further decimated. Our Club's founders were multi-dimensional in their approaches to conservation, realizing the key relationship between game survival and preserving public lands in National Parks and National Forests. Our early members had the vision to see that we needed both the protection and the wise use of those public lands. They were very clear in their goals that these lands were to be used, but not abused. They formulated the "fair chase" hunting ethic to apply to all hunting everywhere.

As we move into the 21st century, we face new challenges as to how to protect wildlife habitat and the animal populations that it supports. Our private lands, which have traditionally provided the majority of our country's best wildlife habitat, are being inexorably diverted to development as our population grows. We are struggling to find ways to maintain open space, wildlife habitat, and hunting opportunities. Success in that endeavor goes to the heart of the future of hunting in North America

Like many hunter-conservation organizations, we have Members who are sensitive – for various reasons – to what has become labeled as the "high fence issue." This is an issue that cannot be ignored as controversy builds across the hunting community and the rest of the population whose good will is essential for hunting to continue in our democracy. I ask each of our Members and Associates, and most certainly those who have strong opinions and views on the subject, to become partners and participants in developing a sensitive and workable solution — a solution wherein the focus comes to bear on recognizing what composes appropriate management within high fenced areas and what is and is not fair chase hunting. This will require dedication to establishing and maintaining a constructive dialog in search of a consensus compatible with recognition of the current reality of high fences and the Club's history and traditions. The beginning point is the recognition of this reality; the existence and increase in the area enclosed within "high fences" legally established and maintained in some states. Matched with that reality of

existence is the question of how hunting takes place within those fences. "Canned hunts" are, without question, outside the realm of fair chase, and I have no doubt that the Club will continue to condemn such activities. However, we cannot deny that under certain circumstances an ethical hunt is possible within areas enclosed by high fences. We are now striving to determine the framework that the Club would recommend for management within such areas including assurance of fair chase hunting. Such will not be easy. It will certainly not take place without debate and even controversy. But, the realities of the circumstances are inescapable and must be addressed. For an organization that claims a heritage of the development and sustenance of the fair chase hunting ethic there is, simply, no place to hide from either reality or responsibility.

For those who live where high fenced game ranges are common and increasing rapidly and want the problem addressed, I ask for patience. The Club wants to address this problem. However, it must be accomplished with deliberate speed and in a manner in which no Member or Associate is left out of the deliberations and the ultimate solution.

The Club's officers will encourage open and continued progress toward a solution. The course to solution will no doubt be difficult requiring patience, persistence, and informed debated characterized by mutual respect and recognition of the duty to succeed. Our Regular and Professional Members have always been selected for their intelligence, resourcefulness, success, and demonstrated deep concern for the future of wildlife and the fair chase hunting traditions nourished by our predecessors. There are none who are not strong-willed individualists. Yet, the Club's history is marked by continued success in working through problems that seemed to defy solution. Such success requires everyone to exhibit patience and commitment as we work together to address the challenges of the new century. It won't be easy, and success will not come without controversy and struggle. But, who is better qualified with enough respect to take on the job than the Boone and Crockett Club? ■

To send a Letter to Boone and Crockett Club, mail to:
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Or drop an e-mail, with the Subject: High Fences, to:
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