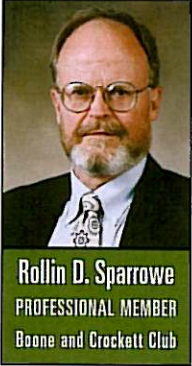


# CAPITOL COMMENTS

## Seeking Responsible Outcomes for Wildlife



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In the last issue of *Fair Chase*, this column highlighted landmark progress in connecting with President Bush and leaders in his Administration. Since then,

contacts and discussions have continued with intent to utilize the "open door" to have our issues heard.

In February, many of those who had met with President Bush in December had a productive follow up meeting with Chairman James Connaughton of the Council on Environmental Quality and an array of CEQ and key White House staff. The focus of the meeting was to explore issues such as wetlands conservation and energy development in more detail, and identify specific points of contact within the Administration for work on the details.

**Having our issues heard by any Administration is no guarantee that our needs will be met. There is a long history that tells us that wildlife will not be a national priority unless people like those in the Boone and Crockett Club and its many partners work to make it happen. Much work is well under way, but the specific outcomes for wildlife are yet to be determined...**

When hunter-conservationists work with the executive branch of government, the devil is always in the details. Chairman Connaughton started our meeting by acknowledging that "implementation matters." His words were a statement that CEQ itself is pursuing implementation of policy changes designed to provide incentives to business to perform on the environment. We may or may not agree with the outcomes, but there is a specific intent at work.

However, the message to us as conservationists is that we have to do the work to identify issues with specific examples of needed actions, and that those will all be balanced against the wide array of priorities faced by government. Getting a bill passed, a decision made on a rule-making, or a positive statement from a President, are all essential steps. The detailed outcomes will take hard work by people like us.

Further meetings with new Environmental Protection Agency Chief Mike Leavitt, CEQ and other White House staff, and agency heads like Steve Williams of the Fish and Wildlife Service, Dale Bosworth of the Forest Service, and Katherine Clark of the Bureau of Land Management, (who are all B&C Professional members) are continuing the dialog. Issues being taken forward include:

- The need for conservation tax incentives for private lands;
- The value of conservation easements to preserve farm and ranch lands and lifestyles;
- Continued conservation of wetlands to meet the no net loss goal;
- Caring for fish and wildlife, while seeking energy independence;
- Support for conservation provisions in transportation legislation reauthorization;
- Access to public and private lands for hunting and fishing;
- State funding for wildlife programs;
- Fishable waters initiatives;
- Fish, wildlife, and recreational considerations in forest planning; and
- Careful implementation of the Healthy Forest legislation.

Most of these issues are part and parcel of the "Wildlife for the 21st Century" proposals that originated with the American Wildlife Conservation Partners (AWCP).

With this large shopping list of wildlife needs, we clearly have our work cut out for us. What continues to be a concern is whether among all the debates about Iraq, energy legislation, the economy, and all the pressures of an election year, our issues can make it to the top and receive direct action. The answer is that most will not make it, but our list of needs is in front of decision makers.

A second meeting with President Bush at his ranch in Texas in April provided Boone and Crockett Club president Bob Model (see article on page 7 of this issue) and others a chance for a more personal level of exchange with the President, Chairman Connaughton, and others in the Administration. Bob and others report a personal interest by the President in doing what is needed for wildlife. In April, the President announced an expansion of his "no net loss" policy on wetlands to one of seeking a "net gain of wetlands." He further reaffirmed his personal intent to see that energy development is balanced to consider wildlife needs. Many more of our issues were discussed both with the President and his staff.

Herein lies the key to the future and the desired outcomes for wildlife that was described as an "open door" in the last *Fair Chase*. The Club and its partners are organizing specific efforts on each of the issue areas we have raised. Some issues, like wetlands, have been an ongoing focus for decades. Others can gain a lot in the short term; many are longer term and will require long-term efforts. Much of this functionality comes through working groups of our partner organizations. We are networking through the AWCP, gaining regular information flow from the Wildlife Partners Network, and developing coordinated plans for action through the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership.

Having our issues heard by any Administration is no guarantee that our needs will be met. There is a long history that tells us that wildlife will not be a national priority unless people like those in the Boone and Crockett Club and its many partners work to make it happen. Much work is well under way, but the specific outcomes for wildlife are yet to be determined, and the Club itself must continue to be a strong part of the leadership to achieve the changes we want for wildlife. ■