

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Robert Model  
President  
Boone and Crockett Club

## A Matter of Choice

As we move swiftly through 2004, I want to discuss choices, and how the choices we make today regarding the direction of the Club will reverberate for years to

come. We are bombarded each day with a dizzying array of choices. This year, national and international political issues have exploded to be followed in November by national elections.

As you might have read recently in *Fair Chase*, the monthly newsletters, or heard from various Members, the officers of the Boone and Crockett Club and other allied conservation organizations have attempted to establish better contacts with the current executive branch of our government. I am pleased that the Administration has been receptive to our overtures. I am particularly pleased that the Administration has sought our advice and counsel on a number of natural resources related issues. Due to these efforts and the receptiveness of the Administration, the influence of the Boone and Crockett Club and our allies in the hunter-conservationist community is increasing rather than waning. Though I, personally, am a relative newcomer to the national policy arena, I was able to seek advice and consent from a number of our Members, particularly Professional Members. These Members, collectively, possess an impressive set of credentials in terms of technical knowledge and political acumen.

During the past year, I have been quickly — and sometimes painfully — introduced to and become more adept at playing in this very important game of appropriate natural resources management and policy establishment. It has certainly been an eye opener for me. It has also verified in my mind that it is increasingly important that the Boone and Crockett Club have a strong voice regarding the natural resource issues that are being debated and are key to the maintenance of the hunting traditions and the overall care of the natural world that led to the formation of our Club over a century ago. We have very serious choices that are critical to maintaining the attention on those key issues that concern us. We can be players or spectators as these issues are decided.

I firmly believe the time is now to return to being, and remain, an active player regardless of the political party in power.

One such contribution we can make that could set the tone for an effective national policy on hunter-conservation and environmental issues would be to host a non-partisan "President's Partnership Conference on Wildlife Conservation." The goals would include:

- American wildlife assessment
- Expanding the federal control of invasive species program
- Incentives for conservation of private land
- Public access to public lands initiative
- Enhanced funding of wildlife conservation in America
- President's conservation leadership training initiative
- Wild animal health (e.g. CWD, brucellosis, West Nile)

I believe that the more moderate sportsmen and sportswomen, hunters, fishermen and the conservation community can agree to work together to achieve the objective listed above. The extremes have controlled our issues for much too long. In order for this to be most effective, we must reach out to the more moderate elements to join with us in our long-overdue quest. I believe that we are already finding areas of "middle ground." Why is it important to find agreement with the stalwarts of the moderate environmental community? First, many of us already wear both those hats — and proudly so. Second, as our population and their works grow, habitat for wild creatures shrinks and our choices become more complex. Where and on what can we best spend scarce time, money, and credibility? Issues that once seemed so clearly sketched in "black" and "white" are now justifiably seen in varying shades of "gray." If we seek absolute agreement from potential allies, and they from us, the future is apt to be quite gloomy for hunter-conservationists, our causes, and our cherished ways of life. "Consensus" or "principled compromise" is the mechanism of achievement of goals in the republican (small "r") form of government, which we so cherish. We must search for, find, and stand on common grounds from which consensus grows.

We clearly see that our landscape, both literal and in terms of the body politic, is rapidly changing. Land fragmentation,

habitat loss, and population growth in once pristine areas are taking an accelerating and negative toll on a way of life we cherish and have worked hard to preserve. We see decisions related to how federal and state lands are to be managed or not managed are decided through political whim or by federal judges ignoring synthesis of pertinent science with what President Theodore Roosevelt might have called the "wise use of natural resources." Over the years, the Boone and Crockett Club has walked a fine political line between protection (i.e., establishment and enhancement of Yellowstone National Park, Grand Canyon National Park, Glacier National Park, etc.) and the application of the "multiple use concept" to the national forests in order to provide, in the words of the first Chief of the Forest Service and early B&C Member, Gifford Pinchot, to conduct management that would provide "the greatest good to the greatest number in the long run."

As we deal with our political choices this year, I believe that one of those criteria will involve "conservation" and how our lands, and particularly our public lands so important to American hunter-conservationists, will be allocated and managed.

The Boone and Crockett Club and its allies played an absolutely critical role in the first decades of the last century in determining answers to just such questions as these. We are striving to play something of that same role in the early part of this new century. A hundred years have passed. It is now our turn to make a difference. Certainly, times and issues have changed; but, in the final analysis, not all that much. It is still the land, what Pearl Buck so eloquently called the "good earth" that is the beginning and end of all those things we hold so dear. I would like to ask that each of you think of that "good earth" and the creatures it supports and the use we make of that land and those creatures as you decide what to inquire of candidates when they seek your support and your vote.

What are the significant differences regarding wildlife and land resource management between the candidates? What is the long-term gain/loss from active management versus passive or non-management of lands and the wildlife? How can workable compromises between the various points of view be reached so that these precious resources are treated with the true over-arching value they

# PRESIDENT BUSH HOSTS SPORTSMAN AND CONSERVATION GROUPS



President George W. Bush welcomed Boone and Crockett Club President Robert Model and the representatives of 15 other sportsmen-conservation groups to his Crawford, Texas, ranch to talk about issues affecting hunting, fishing, and conservation.

"It was a distinct honor to not only meet with the President again, but to actually see how much he cares about the land and its wildlife," Model said. "It reminded me of a time when America was lead by another President (Theodore Roosevelt) who was a hunter, a fisherman, and a conservationist and set into motion the most successful conservation system in history.

This past December President Bush also invited key representatives of the sportsmen-conservation community to the White House to share their concerns with him. During the meeting the President expressed his strong support for habitat conservation.

The President led a driving caravan giving guests a two-hour tour of his 1,600-acre ranch, pointing out the selective



**TOP:** President Bush addresses the leaders of several hunter-conservation organizations at his ranch in Crawford, Texas.

**INSET:** President Bush and Boone and Crockett Club President, Bob Model.

White House photos by Eric Draper

cutting, tree planting, and prescribed burning he has used to restore native grasses and trees and make his ranch a haven for quail, wild turkeys, whitetail deer, and 250 head of cattle. President Bush said he strongly supports conservation easements and other incentives for property owners to conserve wildlife habitat.

"Every day is Earth Day if you are a landowner," Bush said. "There's a big difference between conservationists and preservationists. Conservationists care. And we take action."

"What the President has done to enhance his own property is a testament of his understanding of ecosystems and the inter-relationship between man, habitat, wildlife, and livestock," Model said. "An understanding of America's natural resources is paramount to achieving a balance between energy production and environmental health."

deserve rather than a passing political issue? How have we come to a point where extremists on both ends of the spectrum have boxed the debate to one of "winner take all" and there is no room for respect of views and lifestyles of others long on the land? Science has a significant and legitimate role to play in making decisions about land management, particularly public land management. But, "science" and "scientist" should inform the debate, not be entrusted to make decisions aloof from the public and their representatives. In our system, "science" and "scientists" propose. It is up to others – elected and appointed officials, the people and the courts – to dispose.

Our Club has a wonderful array of Members and Associates from diverse educational, experiential, ethnic, and religious backgrounds who, not surprisingly, hold many different views. It is this diversity that gives us such strength. But, we share a common goal of attaining effective wildlife and resource management for our country. We have a somewhat common lifestyle and we cherish that lifestyle – a lot! We know, from over a century of experience, the value of the hunter-conservationist to the overall conservation effort. We, collectively, are and have been privileged to "know" the wild places and wild creatures throughout the world and in our backyards. Whatever the shifts in political winds, we hold fast to our culture and the wild lands, wild places, and wild things that are central to our being. ■