

# CAPITOL CONSERVATION

## Is Anyone Thinking About the Future?



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A YEAR AFTER THE "CONSERVATIVE REVOLUTION" OF THE 1994 ELECTION, IT IS TIME TO TAKE STOCK OF WHERE WE SEEM TO BE GOING IN CONSERVATION MEASURES UNDER THE 104TH CONGRESS. DEBATES OVER HOW TO ACHIEVE A BALANCED BUDGET, REDUCING THE INVOLVEMENT OF GOVERNMENT IN THE LIVES OF CITIZENS, ROLLING BACK REGULATIONS PERCEIVED TO INHIBIT BUSINESS, AND HIGH-PROFILE ATTEMPTS TO CUT GOVERNMENT ENTITLEMENTS DOMINATE WASHINGTON AND THE MEDIA. TO ADD TO THE MIX, AN ARRAY OF PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES IS CAUTIOUSLY PROBING EACH OF THESE ISSUES FOR A POSITION THAT WILL ENHANCE THEIR CANDIDACY. SUCH A DANCE OCCURS EVERY FOUR YEARS IN WASHINGTON, BUT SOMEHOW THE IMPLICATIONS ARE MORE SERIOUS THIS TIME AROUND.

With funding shortages, hunters and other conservationists can see valid reasons for reductions in size, role and impact of government. They can agree that some laws may need to be improved. Boone & Crockett Club members take justifiable pride in the Club's role of setting aside a foundation of wildlife habitat and management systems to maintain it. But side-shows of the current congressional circus over the budget may be masking some unexpected threats to the future of wildlife and hunting.

For almost three years, the Clinton Administration has been involved in "reinvention" of government. Natural resources agencies have been particularly hard hit. The U.S. Forest Service has lost thousands of positions, many of which were involved in managing Northwest forests of high wildlife value. Revisions in the target years for reductions have accelerated downsizing, with a goal of reducing from 43,000 employees in 1993 to 35,000 by 1996. Real problems for wildlife are emerging. In field interviews with Forest Service offices in Wyoming this summer, I encoun-

tered a reduced biological staff, inadequately trained and inexperienced individuals with major wildlife responsibilities, and doubts on the part of these staff about their capabilities to complete needed work on grazing and timber management issues affecting wildlife.

Background for this concern is found in two national reviews of fish and wildlife biology on the national forests conducted by the Wildlife Management Institute for the Forest Service. In those reviews, spaced a decade apart in 1979 and 1989, assessments of workloads to balance forest management on behalf of fish and wildlife led to recommendations for increased biological staffing. WMI recommendation 17 read: "The USFS should employ enough biologists and technicians to meet wildlife and fish management needs and give these personnel coequal status with other resource professionals." Other recommendations dealt with strengthening incorporation of fish and wildlife interests in planning and timber management, and in balancing resource management staff with those of timber and engineering agency-wide.

The response from then-Chief Dale Robertson was positive, and momentum increased for improvements that were begun previously. We now see the trend in the other direction. Sheer reduction in staff numbers already has markedly reduced capabilities to manage for fish and wildlife. This comes at a time the American people are demanding more attention to fish and wildlife and associated forest values. On balance, Forest Service managers also report some greater efficiencies through downsizing, and improved relationships working with other agencies, such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on endangered species matters. But overall, the outlook is not bright, particularly

with the reduction of several thousand more staff.

This bleak forecast stems from the fact that these reductions are from Administration reductions, and the 104th Congress has just begun its work. Congress intends to cut programs further and refocus on commodity production. The outlook for 1997 is that fish and wildlife budgets again will be whittled, along with many other parts of the Forest Service, and money will be redirected by the Congress to assure that salvage sales and increased timber production are achieved at congressionally mandated levels.

With two strikes against the Forest Service, one through "reinvention" and downsizing, and one through redirection and budget cutting, it is not a surprise that Forest Service Chief Jack Ward Thomas is worried about the future. In recent meetings with wildlife conservation organizations, he pointed out that in his frequent appearances before congressional committees, virtually no one is mentioning wildlife—except, his staff pointed out, in a negative sense. Furthermore, Chief Thomas and other wildlife conservationists are deeply concerned about grazing legislation that threatens to remove the National Grasslands from the Forest Service, emphasizes primarily livestock, and greatly limits input of anyone other than the grazer into allotment management. Other worrisome legislation would transfer national forests and BLM lands to the states.

Why should hunters and other conservationists be concerned about all this? Because those public lands managed by the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and the Fish and Wildlife Service form the core of habitat for many wildlife species, particularly big game and especially in the West. Those lands are a legacy established for future generations by the likes

of Roosevelt, Grinnell, Leopold and many others before us; they are part of the substance and image of America. Likewise, the agencies that manage our public lands are important to us for those same reasons. Within them, professionalism (separate from bureaucracy) based on science but with objective attention to human needs, is both the hub and crux of wildlife management that is supportable by people of many interests.

In the midst of necessary attention to budget deficits, slowing

the growth of government, and planning for the future of America's public lands and wildlife, there must be careful thought and dialogue. What appears to be occurring is pursuit of ideology, without screening or thinking through the impact of proposed changes. Who is thinking about the broad impact of these changes on the ability of agencies to manage appropriately in the future? No one in the Administration or in Congress seems to be. Why haven't sportsmen and sportswomen awakened to what is going

on and what it implies for the future of their sport? Are we confusing ideology and rhetoric with real needs for change? These are questions that true conservationists are pondering as the Washington agenda becomes clearer at the end of this Congress' first year. The Forest Service and the public lands are but one example of change that may not bode well for the future of wildlife and hunting. They all deserve our careful scrutiny; they need our individual and collective response.

# BACK AT THE RANCH

## A Busy Hunting Season at TRM

AS WINTER SETTLES IN AT THE TRM RANCH, LIFE FINALLY BEGINS TO QUIET DOWN AFTER A BUSY HUNTING SEASON. A VARIETY OF OTHER CHORES NOW OCCUPY MY TIME.

THE CATTLE ARE BEING FED EACH DAY AND THE WINTERING WILDLIFE ARE SCATTERED ABOUT THE RANCH. MY BOYS AND I DID A LITTLE BEAVER TRAPPING IN DECEMBER AND IT FELT GOOD TO SHARE SOME TIME WITH THEM... TRAPPING HAS BEEN A LONG TIME PASSION OF MINE AND IT HAS A GREAT MANY DISCIPLINES TO TEACH YOUNG PEOPLE. I HAVE ALSO FOUND TIME TO HARVEST A MOUNTAIN LION OFF THE TRM RANCH. THE MOUNTAIN LION POPULATION

HERE ON THE FRONT HAS EXPLODED IN RECENT YEARS AND MANAGEMENT OF THEIR NUMBERS IS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE. UNGULATE WILDLIFE POPULATIONS ARE BEGINNING TO FEEL

THE PRESSURE OF THIS GROWING PREDATOR POPULATION.

It is interesting to note that these figures denote only the TRM

wildlife viewing enthusiasts, photographers, drop horn hunters, conservation education classes and numerous conservation workshops

comprise hundreds of other people that visit the TRM Ranch and research center each year. The Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Ranch is also opening to the public for the first time, a Watchable Wildlife Viewing Trail. This breathtaking journey into the heart of the TRM Ranch will open this spring (1996). This project was constructed in order to correlate the importance of the TRM Ranch and Research Center with the conservation of

the Rocky Mountain Front region. One hike to the top of this nature trail would help establish the importance of conservation in anyone's mind - even the skeptic!



**Robert K. Peebles**

MANAGER  
Theodore Roosevelt  
Memorial Ranch

### SPORTSMAN SUMMARY FOR 1995

SPRING BEAR .....	10	hunter days provided, 1 harvest
FISHING .....	20	sportsman days provided
UPLAND GAME BIRDS .....	8	hunter days provided
ARCHERY (deer, elk & bear) .....	18	days provided, 0 harvest*

### 1995 RIFLE SEASON

	QUOTAS	ACTUAL TRM HARVESTS
Mule Deer Bucks (early) .....	15	12
Mule Deer Bucks (late) .....	10	4
Mule Deer Does .....	40	25
Whitetail Bucks .....	5	2
Whitetail Does .....	10	1
Cow Elk .....	10	3
Bull Elk .....	5	0
Total Permission Slips .....		77
Total Number of Sportsmen .....		161
Total Sporting Days Provided .....		252

\*The TRM has not yet recorded any archery kills.

Ranch's public contribution to hunting recreation. Yet, in addition there is extensive use of this same Boone and Crockett property by others as well. Hikers, campers,