

## What's Good For Game Is Good For Non-Game, Too

THE HISTORY OF THE BOONE AND CROCKETT CLUB IS A MUST READ FOR ALL MEMBERS. LOWELL BAIER, IN THE *Records of North American Big Game*, 10th edition, DOCUMENTED THE ROLE THE B & C PLAYED IN PROTECTION OF NATIONAL PARKS, ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM AND NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, RESTORATION OF MANY BIG GAME POPULATIONS, AND HOW OUR MEMBERS WERE INSTRUMENTAL, OFTEN BEHIND THE SCENES, IN THE ENACTMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF MANY PIECES OF LEGISLATION.

One of the most significant pieces of wildlife legislation ever passed was what is known as the Pittman-Robertson Act, or the Federal Aid to Wildlife Restoration Act. Wildlife populations were at a crossroads in the early decades of this century. Game species, in particular, were in terrible shape due to market hunting and other pressures, and the depression in the 1930s only made things worse. The field of wildlife management was nascent, first described by Boone and Crockett member, Aldo Leopold, in 1933, but dollars to pay for conservation were sorely lacking. Hunters, during the depression, were concerned enough to call for an excise tax on arms, ammunition, and hunting equipment. Leaders in the Boone and Crockett Club, John Burnham, Gilbert Pearson, and "Ding" Darling, were involved from the beginning and were strong supporters of the idea which became law in 1937. Member Ira Gabrielson, then Director of the U.S. Biological Survey, implemented the Act. In 1950, the fishing counterpart of Pittman-Robertson, the Dingell-Johnson Act (or Federal Aid in Fish Restoration Act) was passed.

These pieces of federal legislation work on two simple principles still popular today.

One is the concept that users should pay for the programs that benefit them. Because hunters and fishermen were believed to be the people who would most benefit from these programs (and because they offered), they paid. These Acts are responsible for restoring many of the game species almost extinct a century ago, and for the outstanding populations we enjoy today.

The other simple concept is that these dollars, while collected by the Federal government, are to be spent by the states. Conservation efforts are most successful when they are locally based, and Pittman-Robertson is a classic example. Additional requirements of P-R are that states must match these federal dollars with state dollars, and they cannot divert any money collected through hunter's licenses to non-conservation programs.

Conservation is now at another crossroads. Almost all of the dollars currently going for conservation efforts are earmarked for either game or endangered species. Game species are doing quite well due, in large part, to user fees supporting local conservation efforts. The report card on endangered species is mixed, at best. One of the problems is that many species are not identified as in trouble until heroic efforts are necessary for their recovery. A mechanism for tracking species populations, and for educating the public about wildlife, is clearly needed. If in place, this could reduce the need for listing species because minor, preventative actions could be implemented before a crisis is reached.

A funding mechanism for just such a program has now been proposed and it builds off of the successful Pittman-Robertson model. Titled the Wildlife Diversity Funding Initiative, a small user

fee in the form of an excise tax on products used by people who enjoy wildlife as part of their outdoor experience or who observe wildlife from their homes would be collected by the federal government and reallocated to the states. State Fish and Wildlife Departments would use these dollars to monitor wild species, to support watchable wildlife and other educational programs, and to support outdoor recreation programs.

The Boone and Crockett Club was an important player in the formulation and enactment of the Pittman-Robertson Act, and at our last Annual Meeting we voted to support the Wildlife Diversity Funding Initiative. More than 400 organizations now support the concept, but for the Initiative to become reality, recreation-based industries must support it. These include mail order companies such as L.L. Bean, Cabelas, and REI; outdoor equipment manufacturers such as Coleman and Johnson Camping; optic companies such as Nikon, Pentax, and Bausch and Lomb; and the Eastman Kodak Company.

Please write or call these companies, and tell them you support this Initiative. Tell them that this model worked well for game species and will work well for non-game, too. Tell them that outdoor recreation's future depends on wild lands and healthy wildlife populations, and that these are competing every day for consideration and space. Tell them that as a user of their products, you are willing to pay a little more and would like them to assist with this effort.

The Boone and Crockett Club has consistently been at the forefront of wildlife conservation and we can do it again. This user fee is small but will generate the funds needed to insure our wildlife heritage.



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IF YOU WOULD LIKE CONTACT  
THESE COMPANIES AND NEED  
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