

HISTORIC EVENT

Sportsmen and Agriculture Groups Seek Common Ground



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An historic event concluded Saturday, October 12, 1997, which may have far-reaching implications for hunters, fishermen, and ag producers into the 21st century. Top-level CEO's and Presidents of 19 sportsmen and agricultural groups representing 6.6 million individuals converged on Kingsville, Texas, October 9, for the first-ever Sportsmen/Agricultural Summit. The Summit was sponsored by the King Ranch, Buick Motor Division, and the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute and was held on the campus of Texas A&M University-Kingsville.

"I was in Congress for 30 years and was Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee for 14 of those years. My only comment about this Summit is 'Why didn't we think of this before now?'" said Kida de la Garza in his opening remarks. He said sportsmen and agriculture have so much in common, not the least of which is the deep love and respect they have for the land and its animals.

The Summit was a series of focus group discussions to bring concerns and issues to the surface and then to find ways the two groups can work together to resolve disputes and build partnerships and trust. Issues such as access, liability, sportsmen ethics, and trespass were raised by ag interests representing corn, soybeans, cattle, sheep, swine, cotton, Farm Bureau and paper.

Water quality, non-point source pollution, farming practices, and intensive livestock management were issues mentioned by such groups as the Izaak Walton League, Quail Unlimited, FishAmerica, Foundation for North American Wild Sheep, BASS, Safari Club International, Trout Unlimited and Boone and Crockett Club. The ag groups agreed these were at the top of their list of concerns as well.

"We integrate our wildlife and ranching and farming enterprises and activities every day of the week, including Sundays," said Stephen "Tio" Kleberg, Vice President of King Ranch Agricultural Operations. "This is a conference whose time was long overdue. It only makes sense for these two groups to work closely together on so many fronts that impact interests of both sportsmen and agriculture. It's a natural partnership," he said.

The two groups agreed to explore partnerships to combat the biggest threat to wildlife and fish

habitat and agricultural production — the loss and fragmentation of these lands to development, condominiums and urban sprawl. Other areas of mutual interest were legislative actions that drive private landowners from the land they cherish, including unreasonable government policies and inheritance taxes that cause prime habitats and lands to be sold and subdivided.

"These are truly exciting times," said Chuck Schroeder, CEO of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association.

"One never knows what marvelous relationships and actions could grow out of this little meeting we had on the banks of Santa Gerturdis Creek," remarked Lance Norris, President of Safari Club International.

Perhaps the most important, the participants from all sectors agreed to the following statement of principles:

"The proper scientific management and use of renewable natural resources is required to sustain human existence and enhance quality of life. Renewable natural resources are many things — animals and fish, both wild and domestic; crops and natural fibers; and indigenous vegetation. These resources rely on scientifically-based management if we are ever to enhance land, water and air."

All of our organizations participating in the Sportsmen/Agricultural Summit in Texas are proud and committed to continuing to provide:

1) The safest, most abundant and affordable food and fiber supply, and

2) Recreational opportunities, while maintaining and enhancing a healthy and bountiful fish and wildlife supply, and

3) Beautiful natural landscapes for Americans and the world to continue to enjoy. ▲▲▲

SUMMIT PARTICIPANTS

American Forest and Paper Association - Cam Carte
American Soybean Association - Krysta Harden
American Sportfishing Association - Mike Hayden
American Quarter Horse Association - Jerry Windham
American Sheep Industry Association - Fran Boyd and
Cindy Siddoway
B.A.S.S., Inc. - Bruce Shupp
Boone and Crockett Club - Dan Pedrotti and James Teer
Ducks Unlimited - Robert Corrigan and Curtis Hopkins
FishAmerica Foundation - Tom Marshall
Foundation for North American Wild Sheep - Phyllis Carlson
and Karen Werbelow
Izaak Walton League of America - Dale Kretchman and
Jim Mosher
National Cattlemen's Beef Association - G. Chandler Keys,
Jim McAdams and Chuck Schroeder
National Corn Growers Association - John Green and
Bruce Knight
National Cotton Council - Phil Burnett, James Dodson and
Carla West
National Pork Producers Council - Jerry King
Quail Unlimited - Roger Wells
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation - Bill Alexander and
Gary Wolfe
Safari Club International - Bill Brewster and Lance Norris
Texas Farm Bureau - Joe Maley
Trout Unlimited - Steve Moyer