



Idaho Wildlifer

A Publication of the Idaho Chapter of the Wildlife Society

Were there conservation issues 100 years ago? - - - Read on!

"Early in 1874, with nearly all the Kansas buffaloes gone, Congress again took up the pleas to halt the slaughter. On January 4 of that year Representative Greenburg L. Fort of Illinois, a veteran of the Union Army, introduced a bill to restrict the killing of buffaloes in the territories. After being read, it was referred to the Committee on Territories, which on March 10 recommended its passage. On February 2 of the same year Fort introduced another bill to tax buffalo hides. This was referred to the Committee on Ways and Means, which reported it adversely on June 10. On the same February 2, McCormick of Arizona revived his bill, which was referred to the Committee on Public Lands and never heard of again.

When the original Fort bill reached the floor, with committee approval, it evoked considerable discussion. This measure would have made it unlawful for any person not an Indian to kill any female buffalo in any of the territories of the United States. It also provided that no more buffaloes should be killed than were needed for food or for curing or preserving meat for the market. The penalty was one hundred dollars for each buffalo unlawfully killed.

One member objected to the preference given to Indians. He also said that hunters had told him it was impossible to tell the sex of a running buffalo. But others assured him that any but the greenest hunter could distinguish the sex of buffaloes while they were running.

During the debate on the Fort bill, McCormick had the clerk read into the record an item from the Santa Fe New Mexican: "The buffalo slaughter, which has been going on the last few years on the plains and which increases every year, is wantonly wicked and should be stopped by the most stringent enactments and most vigilant enforcements of the law. Killing these noble animals for their hides or to gratify the pleasure of some Russian duke or English lord is a species of vandalism which cannot too quickly be checked. United States surveying parties report that there are two thousand hunters on the plains, killing these animals for their hides. One party of sixteen hunters reports having killed twenty-eight thousand buffaloes during the past summer. There is as much reason why the government should protect the buffaloes as the Indians."

McCormick also read part of a letter he had received from Colonel W. B. Hazen, who wrote: "I know a man who killed with his own hand ninety-nine buffaloes in one day, without taking a pound of meat. The buffalo for food has a value about equal to that of an average Texas beef, or twenty dollars. There probably are fewer than a million of these animals on the western plains. If the government owned a herd of a million oxen, it would take steps to prevent their wanton slaughter. The railroads have made the buffalo so accessible as to present a case not dissimilar."

After further discussion, the House passed the bill, with 132 favorable votes and the opposing ones not counted. It came up in the Senate on June 23. After a few objections to favoring the Indians were made and withdrawn, the Senate passed the measure and, a few days before the session ended, sent it to the White House for signature. But President Grant, possibly on the advice of his Secretary of the Interior, let it die for lack of his signature.⁴

Yet the President's pocket veto failed to halt the movement to check the slaughter of the buffaloes. In 1875, William Weston, traveling passenger agent of the Kansas Pacific, discussed with the management of that road the shooting of buffaloes and other game from its trains. The railroad, which at first had encouraged such shooting and had publicized it to attract excursionists, issued orders forbidding this unsportsmanlike practice.

Early in 1876, with the hunting in Texas at its height, Congress again considered the subject. On January 31, Representative Fort reintroduced his bill to make unlawful any killing except for meat and any killing of female shaggies. The bill was referred to the Committee on Territories, which reported it back without change on February 23.

When the bill reached the floor, Fort spoke strongly in its support. The aim of the measure, he said, was to preserve the buffaloes "for the use of the Indians, whose homes are upon the public domain, and the frontiersmen who may properly use them as food. They have been, and are now being, slaughtered in large numbers. Thousands of these noble brutes are annually slaughtered out of mere wantonness. This bill, just as it is now presented, passed the last Congress. It was not vetoed but fell, as I understand, merely for want of time to consider it after having passed both houses."

Fort called attention to the fact that the government was spending large sums to buy cattle to feed the Indians on the reservations. He argued that this money could be saved if Congress would preserve the buffalo herds and allow the Indians to kill what they needed for meat. Another member, supporting the bill, presented a letter from Lieutenant Colonel A. G. Brackett of the Second United States Cavalry. Brackett asked Congress to stop the wholesale slaughter still going on.

Although Texas did not come within the scope of this bill, several members of the House from the Lone Star State took part in the debate. John H. Reagan, who had been Postmaster General of the Confederacy, said he viewed the bill as proper and right. From personal experience, he added, he knew that wanton slaughter was going on and that the Indians were not the ones who did it.

Speaking in opposition to the bill were two other Texas members, stalwart John Hancock and James W. Throckmorton, a former Governor known as Old Leathercoat. Throckmorton agreed that the intent of the bill was good, but he viewed it as mischievous and difficult to enforce. He believed it would bring hardship to a large number of people on the frontier. He also thought that, at a distance, a buffalo cow could not be distinguished from a bull.

Hancock denounced the bill as embodying a bad policy and said that the sooner the buffaloes were exterminated the better. He moved that the bill be tabled. This proposal was defeated, as was the amendment offered by another member that would have limited the ban to "wanton" killing.

The House passed the bill by a vote of 104 to 36 and sent it to the Senate. It was reported there on February 25 and referred to the Committee on Territories, from which it never emerged.

⁴Congressional Record, Forty-third Congress, first session, Vol. II, part I, p. 371, Vol. II, part 3, pp. 2105, 2109.

On March 20, Fort introduced again his bill to impose a tax on buffalo hides. It was referred to the Committee on Ways and Means, which pigeonholed it to quiet oblivion. Thus ended the efforts in Congress to save the buffalo herds that were being rapidly swept from the Great Plains by the booming guns of the hide hunters."¹

¹Gard, W. 1959. The Great Buffalo Hunt. Univ. of Nebr. Press. Lincoln. 324pp.

General

During May, President Jay Gore joined representatives from the Idaho Conservation League and Idaho Wildlife Federation and met with Idaho representatives for Congressman Craig and Senators Symms and McClure. The purpose of this meeting was to personally meet these people and to explain some of our environmental concerns. Issues such as the Clean Air Act, Snake River Omitted Lands, predator control, Birds of Prey Area, public lands (Sagebrush Rebellion), potential trapping ban on public land and the administration's withdrawal of State Section 6 Endangered Species funds were discussed. It was an educational meeting for all concerned. Mr. Goller, Senator McClure's assistant, stated that this was the first time in his 14 years of public service that private environmental groups had sat down to discuss issues. I suggested we make this a 3-4 times a year event and all agreed it would be useful. We need to more fully develop constructive dialogue with our representatives if we are to get them to at least think about our perspectives.

Church and Andrus Receive Chapter Honor

Frank Church was presented the Wildlife Society buckle #1 at the National Chapter monthly meeting in Washington, D.C. in June. TWS Executive Director Richard Denney made the presentation on behalf of the Idaho Chapter. Senator Church was recognized for his many conservation achievements for Idaho and the nation.

Former Secretary of Interior Cecil Andrus was recently honored by the Idaho Chapter for his conservation achievements during his political career. While Governor of Idaho, Andrus promoted controlled resource and economic development that considered environmental impacts. His concern was to assure a continued high quality of life in Idaho. He was active in establishing the Snake River Birds of Prey Area south of Boise. He believes his major accomplishment while Secretary of Interior was his active role in the passage of the Alaska Lands Bill in 1980. President Jay Gore presented Mr. Andrus with Society belt buckle #2. The presentation was made May 6th at a meeting of the Idaho Fish and Game and Ada County Conservation League. The meeting was attended by over 150 environmentally oriented people.

Party Time

Chapter members are invited to a lawn party at Gore's home on July 17th. See the accompanying map for details.

Awards Committee

Al Boss, USFS, Boise, is the chairman of this committee. President Jay Gore extends a big thank you to Bill Mullins for his past chairmanship efforts. If any of you would like to help on this committee, please call Al at 334-1519.

Membership

The Idaho Chapter has recruited 11 new members so far in 1981, the majority of which were signed up at the Coeur d'Alene meeting. The Chapter has experienced a real growth spurt in the last year, with most of the new members being wildlififers recently moved into the State.

It is time to renew your membership by sending in your 1981 dues. Please check the mailing label on this newsletter. If you don't have a red dot by your name, it either means our records are screwed up (let us know if that's the case!) or you haven't paid your 1981 dues. Remember - membership is on a calendar year basis, so even if it seems you just paid last year, they're due again. If you have any questions, call Joyce at 334-1816 (FTS: 554-1816). The reason we keep bugging you for dues is we can't afford to continue mailing newsletters to wildlifers in the State who aren't members, yet we hate to drop someone from the mailing list just because they've forgotten to pay their dues. Joyce, by the way, has refused to pay double dues inspite of the fact that she is now packing another wildlifer.

Pogue-Elms Memorial Fund

The Northwest Section, with the help of the Idaho Chapter, raised a \$400 donation through the raffle of 2 Pogue art prints at their April meeting in Coeur d'Alene. Thanks to all Chapter members who helped make it such a success.

Call for Letters to Support Coop. Units



Wildlife Management Institute

709 Wire Building, 1000 Vermont Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005 • 202 / 347-1774

DANIEL A. POOLE
President

L. R. JAHN
Vice-President

L. L. WILLIAMSON
Secretary

JACK S. PARKER
Board Chairman

April 22, 1981

Dr. Maurice G. Hornocker, Leader
Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit
College of Forestry, Wildlife and Range Sciences
University of Idaho
Moscow, Idaho 83843

Dear Maurice:

Senator McClure's office tells me they are "not receiving much" from the home folks re. closure of the Wildlife and Fish Units.

He is the chairman of the Senate Interior Department Appropriations Subcommittee this time around and, if properly stimulated, is in a position to save the goose that lays the golden egg.

With best regards.

Sincerely,

Daniel A. Poole
President

We made a pitch for support on this issue in the last newsletter, and Dan Poole's letter is pretty self-explanatory. How about we try again? Write - right - right now.

Call For New Secretary-Treasurer

Thanks to Dave and Jan Blumberg for serving the past year as Secretary-Treasurer. If anyone would like to help out in this position this year, please let Jay know.

Minutes of Annual Meeting, April 23, 1981

Call to order 7:35 by President Jay Gore.

Dick Mackie was recognized - Northwest Section Representative of The Wildlife Society.

Minutes of last year's meeting read and approved. Eighty members were in attendance at this meeting.

Committee Reports: Joyce Gebhardt - 134 members, 67 renewals, gave tally by agency.

Annual meeting next year in Boise area. Asked for meeting and program chairman.

0745: Report on environmental issue by Signe Blair.

Jay Gore talked about other committees.

Jim Nee talked about belt buckles - \$12.50 bronze, \$13.50 pewter, 15 percent of gross sold nationwide is returned to Chapter.

Dean Carrier - Mark Orme went to childrens camp to continue wildlife instruction.

Lloyd Oldenburg - 1981 Award of the "Professional Wildlifer" to Lonn Kuck.

Chuck Blair - talked about phone network setup for legislative committee and issues discussed.

Monsanto Phosphate Mine Award - award given to Monsanto for reclamation on mine site.

Jay asked for motion on buckle proceeds - motion made and seconded to donate 50 percent of buckle proceeds to building fund.

0807: Dick Mackie talked about building in Washington, D.C. and the other agencies that will be in the building.

Comments were made on various ways to spend money from buckle returns.

Amendment to motion to donate to the Building Fund for only one year; therefore, 50 percent of proceeds will go to Building Fund for one year. Motion carried.

Jim Nee - \$741 in account - need \$1300 for a student Norberg scholarship.

Jay Gore - asked for suggestions to increase fund.

0820: George Harrington volunteered to take over Norberg Fund.


Daniel A. Poole
President

Lloyd Oldenburg talked about Norberg and give a little life history.

Rich Howard talked about Raptor Symposium. He said he's had a tremendous response for copies of symposium. More copies to be printed in the future.

Danielle Jerry talked about forest management plans. Made motion for Idaho Chapter to review plans and participate in public hearings. Motion and Second - comments by members, motion passed.

Pogue/Elms Fund - Chapter donated \$100 - raffle will be held for prints and other prizes.

Jim Nee - Public Service Announcements - talked about making 30 second spots on radio free - series of 20 spots.

Terry Hershey - motion to sponsor child at youth camp - motion carried.

0845: Mackie talked about giving him input on policies and issues before the national TWS.

Jay talked about Wildlife Luncheon meeting on second Wednesday of every month in Boise.

0850: Motion made and seconded to adjourn.