

THE HUNTER AND CONSERVATION

INTRODUCTION

Today, millions of Americans, young and old, male and female, have developed an interest in conservation and wildlife. Many of these people realize and appreciate the role of hunters in the development of conservation and wildlife management in our nation. But many do not. That's why this information is important today.

FACTS ABOUT WILDLIFE

- Some people oppose hunting because they feel that by preserving wildlife, it will increase. Wildlife, however, is a resource that cannot be stockpiled. If any annual overabundance of game is not harvested, nature often takes over in a cruel and harsh way.

- Weather, more than any other factor, often decides the fate of wildlife. Just as wildlife will flourish under ideal weather conditions, mild winters and bountiful springs, the opposite is true when the seasons are harsh.

- In a harsh winter, when an oversized deer herd depletes all available food, merciless death by slow starvation is inevitable. Predators attack the young and hunger-weakened stragglers. Disease and parasites add to the toll.

- Research shows that a healthy deer herd, reasonably sized to make the most of available habitat, can be reduced each year by as much as 40 percent with no ill effect on future population. Hunters in most states rarely take more than 15 percent. Yet, if left alone, a deer herd can double in size in only two years, quickly deplete available food supplies and face certain mass die-offs.

- So, hunting is a useful part of today's wise game management practices, and by teaming habitat improvement with carefully regulated hunting seasons and bag limits, our professional conservationists make sure that hunters take only the surplus of game populations.

- Today, every state in the Union has a well-organized wildlife conservation agency, financed primarily by hunters and anglers, for the protection and management of wildlife.

MONEY FOR CONSERVATION

The cost of managing our wildlife is extremely high, with hundreds of millions of dollars spent each year.

Once again, the hunter enters the picture because, unlike other state governmental agencies, the 50 fish and game departments receive little support from taxes paid by the general public. Instead, the majority of their operating funds come from hunters and anglers. *Sporting enthusiasts are thus paying, as they have for many years, nearly all the bills for practical wildlife conservation*—and paying them not just for their own benefit, but for that of all Americans.

Dating as far back as the 1920s, sportsmen and women have paid the lion's share for conservation. Through license fees and special excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment, they currently contribute over \$3 million each day for the benefit of wildlife.

The knowledge of how this money is gathered and how it is spent contributes greatly to an understanding of the overall conservation picture, and the hunter's important place in it:

- License fees are the largest portion of the sportsman's contributions to the state fish and game departments, presently furnishing them with over **\$950 million** per year.

- The purchase of a hunting license—whether by a hunter or non-hunter—is one of the best contributions that can be made today for conservation.



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MONEY FOR CONSERVATION *(continued)*

- A milestone in conservation history occurred in 1937 with the passage of the **Pittman-Robertson** Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act. This legislation transferred receipts from a 10 percent excise tax on sporting arms and ammunition from the general treasury to state wildlife conservation programs.
- This tax was raised to 11 percent during WW II and now yields **\$130 million** per year for conservation.
- In 1970, the Dingell-Hart Bill was enacted, making a 10 percent excise tax on handguns available for wildlife restoration and hunter safety training. Proceeds from this tax provide some **\$40 million** per year.
- The archery community entered the picture in 1972 with the passage of the Dingell-Goodling Bill, specifying an 11 percent excise tax on archery equipment. The proceeds, which now amount to some **\$20 million** per year.
- A similar levy on fishing equipment contributes some **\$200 million** a year.
- All proceeds from these excise taxes are divided among the 50 state wildlife agencies. Each state's share is based on its area and number of licensed hunters and anglers. Funds cover about 75 percent of the bill for approved wildlife and fish restoration projects and total some **\$440 million** per year.
- The combination of these three taxes has formed one of the best programs ever devised for the benefit of wildlife, game and non-game species alike, **and has enabled the states to greatly expand their conservation activities.**
- An important stipulation of the P-R Act is that proceeds may not go to any wildlife agency that turns over any P-R revenue to other state programs. This has prevented a number of state legislatures from diverting funds provided by hunters and anglers into their general funds.

- In order to remain eligible for P-R funds, a state must employ trained wildlife specialists. This has encouraged many universities to introduce courses in wildlife management and related biological studies.
- More than half of the revenue generated by the P-R Act is used to buy, develop, maintain and operate wildlife management areas. These include planting feed and cover, restocking game, constructing marshes and ponds for waterfowl, and providing watering places for wildlife in arid areas.
- Another major use of these funds is research, which contributes to sound wildlife management and disease control.
- Almost every one of the 50 states has used P-R funds to obtain a total of some four million acres for wildlife refuges, wintering range, wetlands and public hunting grounds.
- It is important to realize that land acquisition from taxes on sporting arms and ammunition provides the non-hunting public as well as the hunter with state-owned recreation grounds.

Hunters have earned their place in outdoor America.

- To date, hunters and anglers have contributed some **\$20 billion** for wildlife conservation, adding over **\$3 million each day** to that total through payments of excise taxes and purchases of licenses and other permits.
- Surveys by the U.S. government show that hunters and anglers also pour over **\$40 billion into the nation's economy each year. A great deal of this money finds its way into far-reaching conservation programs.**



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