

## **CLOSING REMARKS: SEVENTH EASTERN WILDLIFE DAMAGE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE**

JAMES E. MILLER, NPL, Fish and Wildlife, USDA, CSREES, Natural Resources and Environment Unit, Washington, D.C.

Initially, I want to begin these brief closing remarks by expressing appreciation to Dean Stewart, Phil Mastrangelo, Jim Armstrong, Greg Yarrow, other members of the Program Committee, all of the sponsors, exhibitors, contributors, speakers, and session moderators, and to all of you as participants who helped make this conference successful. As most of you who have ever had the privilege of putting together a conference such as this are well aware, there are always a number of people that are key to the success of the conference who work diligently behind the scenes but are not always recognized. We want to be sure to extend our appreciation to some of these folks including: Judy Coats, Rachal Josey, Jennifer Passons, and Dave Smith for their contributions. Please join me in a round of applause to recognize all of these folks who worked so hard and so long to make this conference a great success.

At the risk of sounding impartial, I want to express our special appreciation to two groups, first to Dr. Sam Polles, Executive Director, Randy Spencer and Bill Thomason and all the personnel of the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks who supported, cooperated and attended the conference. I expand this as well to all other State Fish and Wildlife Agency participants. Professional continuing education conferences such as this benefit significantly from your participation and over the years, I have observed growing interest and involvement by State Fish and Wildlife Agency, administrators, biologists and enforcement personnel. Please let us know how we can continue this cooperative effort.

The second group I want to thank is the students who participated and especially those who presented papers. In all my years of participating in professional conferences, I don't believe I have ever observed the overall quality of student presentations

we heard at this conference. I tip my hat to you all for your preparation and your excellent presentations. You are all winners and I'm sure my colleagues join me in congratulating you and welcoming you into the profession. I can't speak for each of you, but the professionalism exhibited by these students makes me feel very good about the future of our profession, and I am confident we will hear more from them in the future.

I would be remiss if I failed to express appreciation to the officers and regional directors of the National Animal Damage Control Association (NADCA) for their support of the Conference and sponsorship of the best student paper award, and to Scott Hyngstrom and the panel of judges who listened carefully to all the student papers and selected the winner. Thanks, you folks had a very difficult task, and we appreciate your good work.

For those of you who have been both vigilant and diligent in hearing every paper and panel presentation made during this conference, you must be impressed, as have I, at the scope and diversity of the speakers and their presentations. The overall quality of the presentations has been outstanding in my opinion, and I think we all are pleased to have over 200 professionals registered for this conference. It has grown significantly since the first one conducted in 1983 in New York, and based on the growing interest and participation of cooperators, donors, and sponsors, we hope it will continue to progress.

Having been extended the opportunity on several occasions to provide the closing comments for earlier Eastern WDM conferences, I certainly will avoid trying to reiterate or even highlight the presentations made during the previous few days. I would, however, like to reinforce a few points made by a number of speakers and encourage us all

as professionals to continue to work diligently and move forward. These are:

- 1) Don't be negative toward change, because you can expend all your energy being defensive. Instead, work to ensure that changes are beneficial and positive, wherever and whenever possible. For example, I think most of us now realize that the addition of social and human dimensions research and education in the field of wildlife damage management has benefitted and strengthened the scientific value and validity of our work.
- 2) We must recognize and address with appropriate research and education the status, impact, and ecological significance of predator populations and their real and perceived value to the public.
- 3) We must continue to encourage, accept and to involve more professional disciplines to contribute to the science of wildlife damage management, e.g. find appropriate support for increased interdisciplinary research and education.
- 4) We should work toward finding innovative solutions to future wildlife damage management problems that utilize new technologies and are biologically, environmentally, and socially acceptable, while concurrently maintaining efficacious tools and techniques to address current problems.
- 5) We must remember that over 2/3 of the lands in the contiguous United States are privately owned and managed and that the majority of the future wildlife production and recreational use will occur on these lands. Therefore, it is important for the entire profession regardless of the agency, organization, or individual preference, to be committed to helping private landowners and managers provide quality habitat for wildlife while concurrently helping them efficiently and effectively solve wildlife damage management problems.
- 6) I hope you concur that the wildlife damage management profession is evolving and that to

continue this progression we must be proactive and vigilant. If you are not now a member of The Wildlife Society's Wildlife Damage Management Working Group and the National Animal Damage Control Association, I encourage you to find out more about them and what they do, and consider joining. As a long term and active member of both, I encourage you on behalf of each group. We need your participation and I am confident you will benefit professionally by becoming an active member.

Moving away from my soapbox comments, let me take care of a couple of business items before concluding. The first is if you haven't completed and turned in your evaluation comments, please do so before leaving. Your input is critical to the current program committee and to the hosts and program committee for the Eighth Conference to be held in 1997. The second is that we are pleased to note that there are three prospective host states volunteering to host the 1997 conference. We are delighted to have such enthusiasm for hosting the next conference. Obviously we have progressed significantly since the earlier efforts when we had to twist someone's arm to take on this responsibility. In any case, as I understand it, representatives from Minnesota, New Jersey and Virginia have expressed a desire to host the next Eastern Wildlife Damage Management Conference. Since at present we have no specific written criteria, let me share with you, based on my conversations with the program committee, what some of the critical elements of hosting such a conference are. In the very near future we will provide some written guidelines to each of you for submitting a proposal. The proposals should be submitted either to the hosts of this Seventh Conference or to me, by or before mid-December this year, and we will have the Program Committee rank the proposals and have a response back to you by or before the end of January, 1996.

The following guidelines should be considered when developing and submitting your proposal:

-Proposed date and length

- Suggested location to hold Conference
- Hotel costs/arrangements
- Proximity of major airport
- Cooperating agency/organizations that will serve as hosts/coordinators
- An editor for papers and proceedings
- Registration costs and sponsors/cooperators to help offset costs of Conference
- Note that call for papers needs to be disseminated at least one-year prior to Conference
- Proposed theme for Conference
- Coordination of field trip, exhibitors and poster session if planned as part of the Conference

I'm quite sure these do not cover all the critical elements as our hosts for this year's conference can probably tell you. If you haven't already done so, I would encourage that you go home and discuss this with your primary cooperators before submitting your proposal.

I close by saying it has been a pleasure for me to participate in this conference. It was not only a very successful continuing education opportunity, but it was good to see old friends in the profession and to meet new ones. I hope you all have a safe trip home. Thanks again to our great hosts in Mississippi, for a job well done.