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June 1996

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Manig, Herbert F., "THE AMERICAN FARM BUREAU FEDERATION'S PERSPECTIVE" (1996). *8th Triennial National Wildlife & Fisheries Extension Specialists Conference (1996)*. 28.

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THE AMERICAN FARM BUREAU FEDERATION'S PERSPECTIVE

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A fledgling Extension Service learned a lesson early in this century; a lesson that is perhaps more valid today than when it was learned, and a lesson that may be particularly useful to professionals in wildlife and fisheries.

As improvements in agricultural production techniques and procedures were developed by the university agricultural experiment stations, there was an obvious gap between those who possessed the new information and those who needed to adopt it. To meet that need, programs were developed that resulted in professional change agents residing among farmers and ranchers in order to extend the universities' influence by one-on-one, face-to-face communication and actual demonstration.

But, as I remember the story, these initial efforts to cause individual members of the agricultural community to adopt innovation were not an overwhelming success. Then, whether by accident or design, Extension agents began to work with people in small groups instead of individually. And that clicked! Students of the adoption process noted that farmers and ranchers were more receptive to new ideas when they were able to work together and observe neighbors trying and successfully employing them.

This experience undoubtedly gave impetus and reinforcement to the concepts that adults, because of their life experiences and maturity, can learn from each other, and they can often learn best when working in a group. Individuals working with each other in small groups over time often evolve common values, standards, and goals as well.

Examples of descriptive names we currently give to work groups are task forces or teams. Of historic note, the small groups of farmers and ranchers with whom pioneer Extension agents worked were called Farm Bureaus. This accounted for the long relationship that Extension has had with the Farm Bureau, and the fact that many Extension agents ultimately became Farm Bureau employees.

Why do I say that those lessons are possibly more critical today than in the past? Because I have noted for some time that while specialized scientific knowledge is necessary for sound natural resource decisions, the best decisions are made when all affected parties have voluntarily worked with each other over a period of time to craft mutually satisfactory solutions to natural resource problems. So-called solutions that are made in partisan fashion by legislative bodies, "solutions" rendered by judges in hotly contested court cases, and "solutions" dispensed by politically vulnerable agencies usually all have the same characteristic: they are win-lose!

Thus, as cooperators and customers of Extension Wildlife and Fisheries Programs, the farmers and ranchers I represent would probably expect you to continue as agents of change; i.e., to help provide better options. They would probably want you to find opportunity initiating the process for people to achieve consensus and work together voluntarily on wildlife and fisheries related challenges as they relate to agriculture. They would want you to work with them on a win/win basis.

Let me describe how that is being done at this very moment. What I am going to relate has potential for adoption across the United States. And it was Extension driven!

For some time, the Endangered Species Act has provided disincentives for landowners. A Texas wildlife official, Sam Hamilton, said it best: "The incentives are wrong here. If I have a rare metal on my property, its value goes up. But if a rare bird occupies the land, its value disappears."

In an attempt to reduce some of this tension, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt has successfully worked out habitat conservation agreements with large timber companies so that logging and protection of endangered species could occur simultaneously on timber company-owned properties. Secretary Babbitt has also proposed that landowners having 5 acres or less be exempted from enforcement provisions of the Act.

While these initiatives have merit, where does it leave the hundreds of thousands of landowners who have 5 acres or less, but fewer than the major timber companies? With about 960 species on the endangered species list and hundreds more being proposed for listing, it leaves them vulnerable!

Recognizing the concerns of tree farmers due to the listing of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*) as an endangered species, Charles Hammond, Extension Agent in Moore County, North Carolina, assembled a task force of interested parties including landowners, the Environmental Defense Fund, Fish and Wildlife Service, Farm Bureau, and others. They were ultimately able to develop a safe harbor contract under which the Fish and Wildlife Service inventories Red-cockaded Woodpecker colonies on area tree farms, the landowner agrees to maintain those numbers, and the Fish and Wildlife Service agrees to not encumber the landowner with additional constraints should bird numbers increase and colonies develop on other parts of the farm.

It was innovative, it is the only such program that I know about in the United States, it was designed to be win-win, it appears to be working, and it was initiated by

Extension. Mr. Hammond simply explained that Extension's role was "pulling them together, and serving as facilitator." My observation is that this is a superb example of applied behavioral science more than it was avian science or silvicultural science. It was a shining model of adult education leadership, an Extension educator's finest moment.

Yes, there are many other opportunities. Extension Wildlife and Fisheries professionals can be the catalyst and facilitator in successfully addressing resource needs through the active, voluntary participation of affected persons in a democratic process. You can conduct educational programs in which it is recognized that education is a process of behavioral change with behaviors being recognized as knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

You have asked the panelists about ideas for future opportunities. Let me mention some personal thoughts on topics offering potential opportunity for behavioral change. These are not presented in any particular order:

- How market mechanisms can protect species and preserve habitat.
- Why animal damage management is needed.
- Why farmers and ranchers need to be ready to adopt the most humane and most environment-friendly animal damage management tools as they become available.
- Whether human traits can and should be attributed to animals; i.e., anthropomorphism, and what status wildlife and fish should enjoy compared to humans.
- How wildlife and fisheries can be perceived as a desirable and/or profitable asset by farmers and ranchers.
- Appropriate business organization and procedures farmers and ranchers might consider if they wish to financially capitalize on the wildlife and fish and habitat they provide.
- How competition between species, or competition between species and other resources can be resolved; e.g., between predators and game birds, or between waterfowl and grain fields, or between white-tailed deer and rare plants, or between livestock and salmon.
- Whether continued high tech agricultural production methods can ensure the availability of wildlife habitat.
- How to develop conflict resolution demonstration projects involving wildlife and fisheries and farming and ranching.
- What biological diversity is, why it is important, and how best to manage for it.
- What ecosystem management is, why it is important, and how best to conduct it.
- How farmers and ranchers can be appropriately recognized for outstanding contributions to wildlife and fisheries.

In closing, my expectations and predictions for future opportunities relate to your abilities to work successfully as "people" persons. As professionals presumably with wildlife and fisheries academic backgrounds and technical training, if you merely provide the technical "answers" to wildlife and fisheries related questions, then these answers become "your" solution. If you can successfully bring others into the process, answers become "our" solution. The latter are usually much more satisfactory!