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Panel Discussion: The Future of Natural Resources Extension

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The Future of Natural Resources Extension

Panel Discussion*

Proceedings, 11th Triennial National Wildlife & Fisheries
Extension Specialists Conference,
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Gary San Julian, Moderator, *Pennsylvania State University*

Today we want to talk about the future of Extension. At the committee meeting, we talked about what the important things were, and a high priority that everyone is concerned about is going to happen in 2020: Where is Extension going to be, where is the fisheries and wildlife program going to be, where are we in the states going to be, and what kind of support are we going to get?

We asked a number of people to bring their perspective to you, and we'll have each one of our panel members talk for 10 to 12 minutes on their particular point of view, and then open it up for questions and answers. Following that, we will have breakout sessions. Those sessions will be coordinated by Scott Craven, Ed Jones, Jim Rice, and Mike Mengak. You'll have 45 minutes to bring your thoughts together, then we'll talk about what strategy you came up with, and on Wednesday morning David Drake will chair a session on exactly what we can do to make sure we have some control of the future. There is a lot of work to be done, and the question is, how can we do it? Do we need to settle things in D.C.? Do we need to take a different approach? This is an opportunity for us to have our future in our hands and steer the ship as much as possible.

You heard from the senior (and "more mature") retired specialists yesterday and you learned a lot. I hate to say this, but their time is gone. There is a group of us that will be taking that step towards retirement in the next 5 years. Our time will be gone shortly, and it is very important to see so many people here with the opportunity to shape the future. It's in your hands; the leadership falls to you. We're hoping this session will allow you (with the input of everyone here) to get their advice and counsel. Whether you use it or not, it's up to you, but this gives you the opportunity to get it. The future is changing, and in 2020 you're going to be leading the whole thing. We want to make sure you have a program that reflects the diverse clientele we have across the nation.

Some of the questions we asked the panelists are as follows: How do we meet the needs of a diverse public, with this common property resource we all work with? Will the state Extensions programs want to continue to support the natural resource aspects of Extension, or will the push be so great that we'll go back to the "ag mafia" and not necessarily integrate as we have done in the past? What happens with our National Program Leader position? Jim Miller was there for a long time, but he's not there anymore. How do we address this position? Where will Extension be in the Land Grant mission? I'm sometimes guilty of speaking of my own university, saying when it comes to promotion and tenure for new people, there are a lot of academics around and sometimes the Land Grant mission really does not get the justice it deserves. It has served us well for many years; is it time to change that model? Maybe, maybe not. These are the kinds of questions that floated through the committee, and they wanted answers, so this gives us the opportunity to put the future in our hands.

I will introduce each speaker. The order is Jim Miller, Tom Coon, Paul Coreil, Ed Jones, and Scott Craven.

* Editor's Note: This discussion was transcribed from a tape recording of the oral presentations and subsequent discussion. The moderator and panelists had the opportunity to edit their remarks from the original transcription.

Jim Miller, retired CSREES National Program Leader, Mississippi State University
(still fully employed by the National Wild Turkey Federation to reduce populations)

Let me start with a caveat, and please don't misunderstand what I'm going to ask you next, and don't think I'm trying to pat myself on the back. How many of you, during the 22 years I was in the national leader position in Washington, ever asked me to write a letter of support for your promotion or for you applying for a different position, or for an award for someone on your faculty? How many of you requested me to come to your state or university to work with you on a program, a problem, or issue I could possibly help you with, whether I helped or not? I am just trying to plant that seed with you, as we go through this discussion, as some things for you to think about with these few examples.

We talked about these different areas that are of interest to all of us, and I'm like the Apostle Paul in 2nd Timothy 4:7 when he said, "I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith, I have finished my course." Some of us have finished our course, but we still feel deeply about what happens to this agency and this profession. That's why we care about trying to help you people decide what you want to do in the future. I don't want to influence in any way your decision-making process. None of us can predict the future; we all work thinking 10 to 15 years down the road what we might influence in some way. But certainly, I think Extension in this modern day, with everything being done with computers and more and more emphasis on competitive grants and less and less interest on base funding for Extension programs, realize that the times and program needs are changing, and changing dramatically.

When the reorganization of Extension and CSRES happened in 1995 in Washington, I knew what was going to happen. I had seen it before, because when I first came to Washington in that national program leader position, we were a combined agency. Shortly thereafter, it separated and went back to Extension Service and CSRS. In essence, what happened following the 1995 reorganization was, and this is not complaining, that most of the Extension people in NPL positions understood research, and we could take on that research responsibility of reviewing Hatch and McIntire-Stennis grants and proposals, and we could certainly conduct the comprehensive reviews, but our counterparts in CSREES were researchers. The great majority of them did not understand Extension, looked down their noses at Extension, and didn't want to carry out any Extension responsibilities or workload. Unfortunately, they were not individually or collectively directed to do so by the new administration. So we lost a great deal in that reorganization and, unfortunately, we have not recovered. The emphasis, it seems to me, and maybe I'm biased, continues to be more and more on competitive grants research. We could spend hours talking about that. The point is, times have changed, and I think we need to take a hard look at the relevancy of Extension. I've always said that, based on my experience in Washington, every federal agency I ever worked with from EPA, to the Fish and Wildlife Service, to the Forest Service, to the BLM, would kill to have an Extension Service and the state and local delivery system that we have enjoyed in past years. How effectively we've continued to use that delivery system, I don't know; you will have to be the judge of that. We have always been admired as an Extension Service for the capability to deliver educational programs by taking research-based information and translating it into usable and practical information, and effectively delivering it to the people to help them make the decisions to implement new technologies.

I remember doing a review several years back, where the department head and provost were complaining that they just didn't have any support for their programs for that university, and their research programs in their state weren't supported by the legislature at all. At the back of the conference room there were huge glassed-in bookshelves, and on that bookshelf were every masters thesis and Ph.D. dissertation that had ever been done at that particular institution in wildlife and fisheries and forestry. I simply asked the question, "Out of curiosity, how much of the information in those theses and dissertations has ever been translated and put into some form that most of the public and private landowners can read and understand?" It was kind of like a deer caught in the headlights. They replied that they really hadn't thought about that. That is basically what Extension has done during all these years— we've not only identified research, but we've taken the research that was conducted by our land grant universities, paid for by the public, and

translated it into usable, practical information that private landowners and managers can understand and implement to help them achieve their objectives.

We've seen a lot of changes over the past 27 years, and I have observed many changes in Extension programs around the country. Many of them have moved away from the traditional county agent system and the specialists working directly with the county agents. It works differently in different states, and I never would say that different states don't have their own capability of doing the program the way they should, but I think once we move away from being able to inform those county agents and use them to disseminate our information, to tell our story and get that information to the people who need to use it, then we've lost a great deal. Again, I could go on for hours, but I hope I've planted a few seeds for thought and consideration. I trust that the other panel members this morning will touch on more current and relevant issues than those I have briefly highlighted. I hope I've given you a few things to think about in regard to how Extension programs can be conducted now and in the future.

Thank you.

Tom Coon, Director, *Michigan State University Extension Program*

The title of my presentation is "Working Outside the Silos", and I'd like to explain how I think this concept can help us. A couple things struck me today and yesterday in our meetings here, and it all touches closely to the issues we're dealing with in Michigan. First, I think it's important for you to understand that my birth-order is a big thing in my life— I am the 5th out of 6 kids. I didn't get into trouble at all growing up because I watched the kids before me make their mistakes, and my nature was to sit and watch what goes on, what goes right, what goes wrong, and try to make the most of it. I've carried that over into my professional life. One of those older siblings I've spent a lot of time watching is Bill Taylor. Bill has been a good friend and mentor for me and our department chair of Fisheries and Wildlife. He is the reason I'm at Michigan State University. He encouraged me to come there, and I've really enjoyed the opportunities I've had there.

Bill served as our acting dean for about 2 years several years ago, and he was a candidate for the permanent position of dean, but did not get it. So he reached a pinnacle, so to speak, and then was displaced from that pinnacle. It has been fascinating to watch what Bill has done in the time since then. He came back to the department (and I was filling in as acting chair while he was in the other position). I told Bill he needed some time away— why didn't he take 6 months and go do something and get his head straight and come back? He did, but spent most of that time in my office. He did come back, though. I'll never forget this— the new dean made his rounds to the different departments and spent about half of each day with each department, and we presented stuff to him and told him a little bit about our department and what we were doing, etc. After that, the dean had time to talk with us and give us a little presentation and then opened it up for questions. The first question came from Bill Taylor, and Bill asked, "Dean, what can we do to help you?" That really set the tone for the whole conversation that followed and for what has happened since then. If you watch what Bill Taylor has done since then, he has been using the political and social capital that he developed, when he was dean, to go around with other deans on campus and leverage positions like you wouldn't believe. In the time that Bill's been back in the saddle (since 2002), the department has grown by another 10 positions. That's simply because we got positions that are joint with criminal justice, natural science, veterinary medicine, etc. What he's done here, the model for that, is that he's learned to work outside the silos to stretch our discipline more broadly, because it needs to be broader. In doing so, he has brought more resources to the table.

When I went to Michigan State in 1989, we had 14 faculty in fisheries and wildlife. Jim was there in 1995 for a CSREES review, and at that time we had about 25. Today we have over 40 faculty members in the department, and it has come largely from 1 thing: creating partnerships. In our case, it's been with our DNR and the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission, and also making those internal (MSU) partnerships by reaching out beyond our core discipline, as in the example I have just given you. That kind of frames my thoughts here in thinking about this.

The other thing we have found it helpful to do is to step back and ask the “mission” question: Why do we exist? We’re all very dedicated to environmental issues and very dedicated to our professions as fisheries and wildlife scientists and as educators. But why Extension exists, why there is a wildlife and fisheries program in Extension, is not because of the passion that we have. Why we exist is to help other people realize their passions and dreams with respect to wildlife and fisheries. Alone, we could do quite a bit to actually implement conservation, but it is not nearly as much as we can accomplish when we have (like Marty has) 150 master naturalists educators scattered around the state of Florida. When we start multiplying our efforts by bringing other people to the table and helping them to actuate their passions about wildlife and fisheries conservation, then we really have impact. It is important for us to step back and ask why do we exist? We exist to help *those* people realize *their* passions, not for *us* to realize *our* passions. Keeping our eye focused on who we serve and how we serve them through educational processes, I think, is really critical for us to find our way through some of the challenges that Gary identified earlier. We’ve got a number of issues facing us, in fact, let me jump ahead here and talk about those.

These are the three institutional challenges I thought I would touch on that I see us facing in our programs. First of all, we have a federal bureaucracy that seems to be ignoring our program area, right? Second, we have university administrators who seem to devalue the Extension mission. And third, we have federal, state, and sometimes county governments that are giving us fewer resources to work with than we’ve had in the past, either in real terms or when we account for inflation. In listening to the conversations yesterday from the seniors at the front table, those are some of the themes I heard recurring throughout that conversation, and then turning that around as we look forward.

First of all as to the federal bureaucracy that seems to be ignoring our program area, the bottom line is we are in an agriculture agency, we are part of a bureaucracy that is ancient, and ancient bureaucracies are extremely slow to change. Even though we’ve had realignments such as Jim talked about in 1995 with CSREES (and those can have tremendous impacts), what I would suggest is that we not focus so much on USDA and what they’re doing to us, but step back and take control of the reins as Gary articulated earlier and say, “Why do we exist and what can we do in order to make sure we are able to accomplish that into the future?”, because my premise is that Extension is needed more now than ever. It’s just that it’s not strictly needed in the traditional ag and home venues that people often associate it with, so we need to find ways to stretch our wings and spread over other parts of the federal bureaucracy.

We’ve talked about the Fish and Wildlife Service and other Department of Interior agencies that would like to have our service and would like to have what we have, so let’s make it available to them. Let’s create new partnerships that will help us to bring to bear the expertise of the Fish and Wildlife Service or BLM or the Bureau of Reclamation, or whoever it might be, on those passions of the people we serve and the individuals and organizations that are committed to conservation principles. We need to stretch beyond that and we need to take charge. If we don’t have a National Program Leader, if we don’t get a National Program Leader, let’s create our own. Let’s create our own leadership team. Who are the senior members of wildlife and fisheries Extension? Let’s form a steering committee of those and have them take charge and go into a conversation. I can go in and have a conversation with Dan Kugler and say, “As Extension Director I want to see us move in this direction, I want to see a National Program Leader in wildlife/fisheries” and it’s probably not going to amount to a whole lot.

Jim has been knocking on that door a lot, and still we’re in this state of uncertainty. I think if a core of four or five people go in and tell them “this is what we need, we want an audience with not only Dan, but with Colien Hefferan and whoever else it might be”; maybe we need to go talk to Gale Buchanan, the new Under Secretary. Whoever it is, let’s go in and have that conversation and make sure they understand we have a vision that is a lot broader than they might think it is. We have a vision of how wildlife and fisheries relates to everything else that’s going on in Extension. Working outside the silos is one way of talking about how to get us beyond this being stuck with what CSREES is, or isn’t, doing to us. Let’s take control of the reins and move around.

The reason I say Extension is needed now more than ever, is because what we really need in this country is to advance a civilized dialogue around a lot of different issues including conservation issues. You see *Crossfire*, you listen to Rush Limbaugh, and what we have is sort of *WWF* (World Wrestling Federation) in rhetoric, right? It's all for show and yet the scary thing about that is you start seeing those same stupid habits show up at county commission meetings or in debates in legislature. We need a civilized dialogue where people come together out of respect and honor the presence of scientific knowledge and understanding, and are willing to use that in concert with their own values to find solutions to conservation problems that involve compromise. We don't compromise anymore. This *WWF* mentality says we've got to have winners and losers. The bottom line is that the way conservation has advanced in the past is not by having winners and losers, but by finding compromises that everyone can find benefit in. We really need for Extension to be in the mix of that, helping to facilitate that dialogue, helping to equip people with information, decision tools, etc.

Universities are about scholarship, right? If we have administrators who don't value Extension, let's make sure they understand the scholarship of what we're doing in Extension, the creativity and the peer review. Those are the two elements of scholarship that there's a creative part to it, and there is a peer review process involved in it in some way or another, so that others have an opportunity to say this is a value or this is not a value. Let's make sure we bring that to bear in our discussions about promotion and tenure and in doing so we've come back to the basic principles of the university and we've moved away from the bean counters' emphasis on IDC. IDC is not a measure of scholarship. It is a measure of a lot of things, but it is not a measure of scholarship. We need to make sure that when we're doing evaluations for promotion and tenure it's about scholarship.

And finally, we do need to be entrepreneurial. It's interesting there are futurists who say by the year 2055 half the people in this country will be self-employed. Entrepreneurship is the new paradigm and we need to be part of it; now, that means things like the presentation Andy gave yesterday about helping landowners be entrepreneurial in turning their natural resource assets into profits, etc. It also means helping conservation organizations like Trout Unlimited and Pheasants Forever learn how to be entrepreneurial. Entrepreneurs are not people who are money makers, they are risk takers. They are so passionate about accomplishing something (it may be making a profit, but it might be preserving a trout stream) that they will take risks. We can be a part of that. We can help to equip entrepreneurs whether they are conservation organizations or business operations and help them to be wise risk takers, to make decisions based upon the best knowledge available. That's what we do in Extension. That's it for my PowerPoint, and I look forward to hearing from the others.

Paul Coreil, Vice Chancellor and Director, *Louisiana State University Extension Service*

I appreciate being invited here today and sharing some thoughts with you and hearing your feedback. I guess the first message I want to bring is that I see the future as being bright for wildlife and fisheries programming in Extension. I think it is going to be the model by which we operate that's in question, not the relevance of the programs.

When I started as a county agent in a parish (county) office, I immediately saw how much people gravitated to these issues, how much it was close to the stakeholders, the local government and the legislature and the congressional delegation we worked with. I tell you, we have a lot of strength in Congress. The issue is more administrative challenges than it is congressional challenges. We fought back for 2 years now a proposal to transform funding Hatch Act funding from base funding to competitive funding, and it wasn't even close in congressional committee. It tells you Congress is supporting the programs we do, I think it's just a difference of opinions in terms of how strong the partnership commitment is from the CSREES and USDA and the states. I like Tom's idea of us not waiting for the partnership to stay the way it was because apparently that's not the sentiments of some people at CSREES. Let's work together and formalize our own

relationships among Land Grant institutions because the strength is there, the need is there, and the relevance is there.

I think we need a national partnership. I think whoever is pushing to reduce base and formula funding is missing a very important point. Look at the strength of each of the state's programs that you give back for the little investment you're giving. Primary funding I get in Louisiana I get from the State Legislature. It's almost 70%, so I have to make sure we're meeting the needs of the people of the state of Louisiana. I would think that Congress agrees with us, and apparently they do, and I would hope and wish that USDA would see that as a strength to make sure our programs stay relevant in each state. Without capacity funding, how do you maintain some of the ongoing programs we need to meet special, state-specific natural resource need?

Who's going to control the agenda if we cut capacity funding and increase competitive funding? The agenda will move from state priorities to perceived national priorities. I think we can have both. I think if we need to continue pushing back to make sure that we don't lose the capacity funding we have in Smith Lever and Hatch, and that any additional funds we get for competitive, do not come at a sacrifice for our base funding. I think it would be ridiculous to reduce capacity funds, when one considers the tremendous value CSREES is getting for the people of this country. We've stood by that in the southern region. I'm the current chair of the southern region directors, and we feel that Create 21 in the end did say they were going to maintain support for base funding in Smith-Lever and Hatch and McIntire-Stennis with adjustment for inflation. Hopefully, we'll be able to have some increases to adjust for inflation that we haven't been getting. So if we accomplished that in Create 21, that might be something good, but we did get increases the last 2 years in Smith-Lever (very small/incremental).

We're finding support for state and local Extension programs to be strong in Congress. I think we need to make sure we continually work with our congressional delegation so they know the value of what we do. I meet with all the delegation on a regular basis, and they keep telling me they are in full support of base funding. We have been told the issue is lack of support for formula funding from the administration— they have indicated that they can grow programs if we go to a more competitive route. You know, that remains to be seen. OMB's been given the blame for that, but we feel there's room for both. I think as an organization of educators that are partnered with CSREES, I would urge and implore them to maintain support for our base funding as a full Land Grant partner.

Several issues were sent to us to discuss, including tenure and promotion. I have one of our faculty members here in the audience and I know he's fully aware of our departmental merger. We've brought all our Extension specialists into academic departments within the last five years, and I've been director for five years, so it's been quite a challenge. There's no reason why we can't tenure 100% Extension specialists using scholarship in Extension. It's not rocket science. I've found in the departments there's a major challenge there, because if you don't have some research portfolio with a significant amount of peer-reviewed journal articles, which I think are great, that's not Extension scholarship. That's scholarship, but what are you going to do to bring that to application? If you haven't done that, you're not doing Extension work. Publishing research findings is not Extension education. The process to get clientele to apply research so people can improve their lives is Extension! If research is not ultimately applied, we fail in our Land Grant mission.

I've had to fight a hard battle in the area of recognition of scholarship in Extension. I've had many department heads in my office come in and say, "Well, he didn't have any journal articles, so I don't think we're going to tenure him." I ask them what he did in Extension, and he'll say, "Oh, he did a great job, he's got publications, great Extension workshops, a curriculum, he's worked with the county agents, he's trained them, he's a great guy." I ask then, "Why aren't you tenure-ing him?" So we created a policy for Extension scholarship that clearly delineates what tenure in Extension is all about. It's in a policy statement, it's clear, it's in black and white and all I tell them is to go back and read policy statement 42; if you follow that you'll be in good shape; if you don't, I'm going to over-rule you, and I will. I cannot let people with closed minds change our Extension Service mission and change what we want to deliver to the citizens of Louisiana. The

appropriation we get from the State Legislature is for Extension, not for other university missions. The other missions are very important, but they get their own appropriations.

We've got to deliver some outcomes in Extension that are of value, and not try to meet criteria that's been established because of academic departmental tradition. So, I've fought that battle and I think so far we've made progress. There are a lot of Extension specialists that feel pretty lonely in their departments, but we will continue building unity in the spirit of working together for all Land Grant objectives. I've told the department heads and faculty members (both orally and through memos) that we need to follow policy and continue to push for achievement of scholarship in Extension. That's what we're being paid to do.

I think there's a strong future for wildlife and fisheries Extension work, and I'll give you a quick story. In Louisiana, we just passed three constitutional amendments state-wide, 80% supportive, looking at dedicating off-shore oil and gas for coastal wetland restoration. Who would have imagined 80% of the people would dedicate all those funds to restore an ecosystem? But they want it. They want it because of the functions and values it has to protecting people in communities from hurricanes like we experienced in 2005 (Katrina and Rita). I think people are starting to understand that the climate change is starting to impact them. We saw it with the hurricanes. There has been a lot of debate about global change, climate change, but we're starting to see it clearly in the sea level rising in the state of Louisiana, and we've got to deal with it. It's going to have a lot of serious implications for our fish and wildlife resources. We're implementing programs for our communities so they can see using GIS technology in pictorial form and hear the applications of sea level rising at the rate it is today, over the next 50 years. This isn't just "pull it out of the air", this is data and it is true predictions, what it's going to mean to shrimp, crabs, wildlife, and communities. You can hear a pin drop in those meetings that we're having along the coast now because it's real and we've got to deal with it. It's a whole lot different when they see that things aren't going to be stable and they begin to realize they have to start taking action now.

So I see our Extension specialists as being critical to bringing that kind of information to the agents and to the local communities so they understand what is happening and what are the changes taking place. The cause of it? We're not going to debate that, it's just real. So let's deal with it, whether it's being caused by natural changes in climate, or there is some influence from man-made fossil fuel burning.

On support, a total 87% comes from the legislature, we get about 10% currently from local government for our Extension programs, and in the last year we've had six counties pass county-wide taxes to support the Extension Service. They don't want to see us leave, they don't want to lose their county Extension office. Why? Well, they like the people there, but they also know they have a Land Grant institution at their fingertips right around the corner that can bring excellent information down to the local level, and it'll be information that can be trusted and valued. There are so many challenges we are dealing with that these people cannot deal with on their own, that they want to have a connection to the university and call on a specialist or a department and say come and help us, tell us what's going on. So, with that connection, I think we'll see a lot more need for us to stay in a county-based Extension program with excellent relationships between research, with our Extension specialists and the people that apply life-improving research at the local level. Thank you.

Ed Jones, Associate Director, *North Carolina State Cooperative Extension*

I appreciate the opportunity to be on this panel. This is my favorite group of people to be with, and I don't get to spend time with fisheries and wildlife specialists very often anymore. There are 3 people in this room who were my mentors, and it's a great opportunity for me to publicly thank them. One is Pete Bromley. I've been paid to do Extension work for 23 years, but I've really done it for 30. As a graduate student, Pete put me in his diesel rabbit and got me doing things I never believed possible, especially for me. I have to thank him for those opportunities and his mentoring. Pete will also say that I was there to see the mistakes he made, so I wouldn't make them, much like Tom's experience of being the 5th of 6 kids. I appreciate Pete's guidance, counsel, and friendship over the last 30 years.

Jim Byford is another of my mentors. When I went to Mississippi State to be a wildlife specialist, I was told I needed to go up and visit with Jim. I had the good fortune to spend a week with him. I must say he got me on the right track, and I've always appreciated Jim's guidance. All of us here and the youth involved in WHEP should always be grateful for his help with getting the program off to a great start. He even encouraged me to pretend to be Aldo Leopold on occasion.

And of course, Jim Miller, who was everybody's mentor. We all remember those monthly packets of information that came from Jim and his 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7-page letters of all the things that were going on and letting us know what was happening and keeping us informed. I've really appreciated Jim's friendship and guidance, as well.

As we look at the future and I look at it from my vantage point, I have a great deal of optimism. Part of that optimism comes from all the passion I've seen in the past couple days among you. In fact, some of you when you were giving presentations yesterday, I was convinced you were televangelists. You were so excited about what you were talking about and what you are doing. The passion is certainly present in this group of professionals.

Another source of optimism is that there are a lot of smart people in this room. There are great, young minds that have come into this profession with the passion and talent to fill in where some of us have started things or thought about things but didn't know how to make it happen. More importantly, you are developing original and exciting ideas and programs.

The programs that you implement are relevant, and that also provides optimism. You all are doing very important programs; programs that are needed. You say, if that's the case, how come there aren't more of us? Your university may have 3 people working on dairy or goat programs, 5 or 6 working on cotton or corn or another subject area, and there is only one of you, or if you are fortunate there may be a couple of you. You may have to deal from everything from farm ponds to urban animal damage, to big game management, to invasive species, and more. You are right, that is very likely the situation.

A couple years ago, NC Cooperative Extension engaged a PR firm to help us craft what our future was going to be. One recommendation they gave us was that we needed to focus our programs. We need to focus so we can market our programs and impacts to our stakeholders and the public at large. They also said that if Extension didn't exist, it would be created. We've all heard the rumors about creating an energy extension service and/or an urban extension service. We have to step up to the plate and say we think that is not necessary. We have the infrastructure in place, we have the network, and we have the ability to capture the interest and resources to make it happen.

The PR firm also helped us to engage in a dialogue with county managers. In North Carolina, 30% of our budget in real dollars comes from the county government, so we want to pay attention to what they have to say. They told us the biggest issues they are addressing are K-12 education, economic development, and Medicare. We in Extension can have a direct impact on two of those issues. We saw examples of great programs yesterday that involve K-12 education that can have a great impact on teachers and students. We are all concerned about the ecological illiteracy of teachers in our school systems. We have an opportunity.

Economic development is another major responsibility and opportunity for Extension. Agriculture is an economic development opportunity. We need to understand and embrace that our primary role in agriculture is for it to be a profitable and sustainable enterprise. We have to bring that together with all the other economic development opportunities open to us and make that a package, a system that comes together. Now that may come down a little hard on some traditionalists, but times are changing, and that's where the people in this room have a great opportunity.

The Extension Service needs you—needs every one of you—not only because your programs are relevant and important, but because you have the capacity to do something that many Extension specialists don't even think about. The problems of today are complex. Anyone who has had an ecological education understands that the world is complex. If you are dealing with a commodity, you may think a multi-disciplinary team is having a plant pathologist, an economist, and a soil scientist on your team. If you are a wildlife or fisheries specialist, your team includes multiple agencies, non-profit organizations, economists

and a number of other folks. You understand the complexity of the situation and how to bring people together to address it. That is an important skill needed in Extension today.

Leadership seems to emerge from this cadre more than just about any other group of specialists. We haven't recognized it very well, but it does happen. Some of us assume leadership roles because there is no one else at the time, some of us become leaders because of talent and competency like Paul, Tom, and Jim Knight, and it makes a big difference. It makes a big difference.

So what I'm telling you, is that wildlife and fisheries specialists have tremendous leadership capacity, you understand complex issues and you know how to bring partners together to address issues, and that's what we have to be about if our organizations are going to continue to be relevant in the future.

So, what does that mean? There are teams of faculty on your campus who don't know they need you, but they do. You have to tell them they do. I have never once asked a wildlife or fisheries specialist to work on something with me that they have not said "yes, I'm glad to do it." That demonstrates the capacity, passion and understanding about doing what needs to be done. So, you have to be assertive within your institution and in the field. A lot of your programs are not delivered through county agents, but they could be. And I would dare say that neither Paul nor Tom gets a lot of calls from the wildlife agency or their state wildlife federation or similar organizations. As a result, you can assume two things. One is, you're doing a great job and nobody's complaining about you or, nothing is happening at all and nobody knows it what is possible.

Not a week goes by that we don't get a call from one organization or another wanting us to address some issue or need. You should get those constituents to make their needs known to your administration, that's when things can change. That can affect things at all levels in the organization.

There are two final comments I would like to make. One is that I like nothing better in my position than to be able to brag about the great programs that specialists are doing. For that to happen you have to let administration know what you're doing. The best thing you can do is to keep your program leader informed about your programs. Brag on yourself. It is always good for administrators to have that information.

The final comment is in regards to a National Program Leader. When I was assistant department head and department Extension leader in forestry, I heard from Jim Miller and Larry Biles on a regular basis. They were two people who cared about the resource and cared about the professional colleagues they had across the country. They still do. I assumed that was the case all across Extension. When I went into a program leader's position, I discovered the only two people I ever heard from were Jim and Larry. Unfortunately, things have changed at CSREES, and the National Program Leaders are responsible for funding portfolios and may not have the interest or opportunity to develop the relationship with state specialists that we have all come very used to and, in some ways, have taken for granted. Consequently, we have two choices, and I think Tom laid them out.

One, we can do the best we can to get somebody in there to do that job, and I would dare say it would need to be somebody who is in this room so they understand what Extension fisheries and wildlife is about. Or, the leadership can develop within the ranks and move on and not wait for anyone else to make things happen. We have plenty of work to do.

Thank you.

Scott Craven, Department of Wildlife Ecology-Chair, *University of Wisconsin-Madison*

Good morning, and thanks for the opportunity to be here. I'm very gratified that a few points that I had hoped to talk about actually haven't been discussed, so that will work out well. I've gotten over the bitterness of not being invited onto the "council of elders" on yesterday's panel, in that I'm into my 28th year as an Extension wildlife specialist. Then I realized last night that I'm close to 20 years younger than everyone that was on the panel, so I think that had to be the explanation.

Anyway, part of my assignment is to talk about the future and some of my perspectives as a department chair. I have a wonderful Extension team in Wisconsin, and being part of that team and chair has

been a wonderful situation. So, from that standpoint, I just urge you to realize that Extension people, I think, tend to have the skills that make for good administrators and very often do ascend to at least the level of department chair and, in some cases, higher up in the program ranks. In a way that's a very good thing for us, because it provides that connection, and in a way it's also a little detrimental because we lose some good people to administrative time when they could be contributing to the wildlife function. I think that's all I'll say right now from the chair's standpoint. Change is always a little disconcerting, and we're right now facing a merger with another department in the college, and I'm a little worried about how it will impact our Extension team over the next few years. I'm very much worried about presiding over the demise of Aldo Leopold's department. I'm having a great deal of trouble making that case to the administration. So, everyone has their own set of challenges.

A couple things I wanted to mention briefly— one is the issue of identity. Yesterday, I think in Jim's remarks, he said something about being sure you secure your place at the table. It is very important and we all need to do that, but I would argue that it is equally, perhaps more important that we secure "our" place at the table. I am continually dismayed over the last few years to see things happening at the national level where I think in the past Extension would have occupied an obvious seat at the table, and yet did not. A couple of recent examples... if you just got your recent copy of *The Wildlifer*, there was an article in there about something I was very curious about, the Human-Wildlife Conflict Coalition. The Wildlife Society is making a big deal about it and everyone is asking 'what the heck is this thing?' Now it's finally explained and there is a list of partners who are already at the table discussing the Coalition. Extension wildlife specialists are nowhere to be seen, and yet I can't think of a group, as I looked at the list of partners, better positioned or with the track record to contribute to that effort. And yet, we're not there.

Somebody mentioned earlier this morning that some of our bigger federal agencies, or even state agencies, would kill for our capacity. I'm not sure I'd agree with that, because I also have observed the tendency of many of these agencies to be building their own capacity in the things we've done for so long. I remember when I started back in the late 70's and we were at a wildlife managers' conference in Wisconsin, and we laid out all our Extension materials as a display. I remember the managers saying how wonderful it was, and they could use all those kinds of things, but they had no capacity within the agency to do it. So, they would come to us... we need this, we need that, let's work on that... but no more. They all have their own I & E divisions now, and they tend to fund their own first, as you might expect. I think this is a problem.

Another example within the last couple of weeks, NRCS announced they are forming a working team or group to deal with ag lands and wildlife habitat education. I said, "What the heck?" This should be something we're involved with, and yet we're not.

So, the identity issue, I think, is particularly important. Related to that, I guess someone may remember the paper Jim and I presented at the Maine conference six years ago, the gist of which was related to whether all of these things going on were really opportunities for collaboration or whether it was competition. I think that's still something we need to think about as we're brainstorming the rest of the day... as whether these other groups are building their own capacities, and whether we tend to get in on the ground floor of some of these good programs, build them, develop them, and just at the point they are bearing fruit or have legs of their own, all of a sudden ... ah, it's now the agency's program or it's some other group's program, and we're marginalized and forced to go back out and find something else to work on and build. That's not true of all programs, but it's certainly true of some, so I think the identity issue and the notion of partners is certainly important. We have to be careful. There's a fine line between being a working, functioning, valued partner, and being used for some purpose until we're no longer needed. Be careful about that.

The leadership issue— everybody's talked about that. I have a couple suggestions as we think about our future. The first one, and don't take this wrong, certainly not Jim, but we need to move past Jim Miller. As you heard yesterday and again this morning, Jim did it all for us. He set the bar unbelievably high for that position. I think that's one of the reasons we've had trouble in the past when the position was open in

finding someone to take it. The shoes are just too big to fill under contemporary constraints. But yesterday you heard Jim talk about meeting with a certain senator, or with the director of the Fish and Wildlife Service. He was our lobbyist in Washington, and we needed that connection to the movers and shakers then, and we need it even more now. Somehow the leadership gap has to be filled. However, I think it's time we think beyond the Program Leader model we had and consider there are probably other obstacles besides current leadership with which we have an unbelievable disconnect. Besides that disconnect, besides the shoes that Jim left open, we need to think about some other potential obstacles there that we can work around. Washington is probably realistically one of them.

It's time for the leadership in Washington to, with our help, think a little more creatively about that position and probably realize that with e-Xtension, email, video conferencing, and technologies we can't even imagine, in another two or three years or five years or whatever, that that person probably doesn't need to spend all their time in Washington anymore. He may not even need to be headquartered there. If our leadership could be farmed out to his own institution, home state, home town, or whatever, with time in Washington when necessary, I think the position might be a whole lot more palatable. That might be Plan A or B.

We also need a Plan C, like other people alluded to this morning... and that's if nothing happens in Washington, or even if it does, and we end up with something part-time or whatever, we need to form our own leadership team somehow. I'm sure that's going to be complicated, the communications issue will be difficult, but somehow there has to be a team that can convene periodically, perhaps in association with the Wildlife Society conference every year, the North American, the wildlife damage conferences, somehow get together more regularly. Those, I guess, are my thoughts I'd offer for the discussion coming up as far as leadership.

Finally, and related to that, the future of this meeting. I admit to being a little pessimistic about the future of the whole situation after the Arkansas gathering, which was very poorly attended. We had a great meeting, we always do when a group of friends of like minds get together, but there were very few people there and very few new people. That's been turned around at this meeting. There are many new people here. That is terrific. If Ben West deserves the credit for that, then I think we should send him a cake or something, but however it happened, having the new folks here is absolutely essential to the future of this gathering. Whether it continues to occur like this or not will be the discussion coming up later that David will lead and the newer people, as Jim said, should have everything to say about that. Those of us who have been around a long time can be consulted, but it's really your call. The only thing I'll say in the matter is that getting together every three years, and only every three years, is just plain stupid. The whole world can turn upside down in three years, and if you miss a meeting for whatever reason (you're sick, or it's opening day of elk season), you're six years potentially out of the loop of meeting with your colleagues. That's just plain foolish, and it makes it difficult to get things done.

There are my thoughts on that matter.

A couple of quick take-a-ways, building on things people said yesterday. One, don't forget the importance of our credibility, and do everything you can to protect it. We, unlike most of our colleagues and a whole host of agencies, don't have the baggage of working for a regulatory agency. That's huge. So protect your credibility. If you lose it, you're dead in the water.

Second, Skip was talking about the importance of writing in terms of your career advancement, and I'd just add a simple thing to that: Nothing in terms of my 20+ year career has meant more to my credibility and my ability to get things done in the state of Wisconsin than working with the mass media, primarily private and commercial radio, and sometimes television. If you can get into a radio network where you can reach 100,000 or 200,000 people weekly or monthly, you just can't imagine how much it will do for you. Everywhere you go, people will come up to you and say, "Oh, that's what you look like," or whatever. You immediately have an "in" with them that can be extremely valuable.

Third, there's a new program coming online that you'll all hear about, we hope you'll all get involved, and I just want to leave this as a high note— "Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow". How many of

you hunt? I'd like a show of hands. Quite a few. This program is predicated on the simple idea that every student at every university in the country in natural resources who has any potential for going on in a career in natural resources, should understand what hunting is all about. We don't care if they're participants— it's not a recruitment program. It's a very intense 3-day workshop so those students understand why some people hunt, their motivation, their passion, what's behind it, the techniques, the tools and the importance to management. It's been a terrific program. We're in the second year of the pilot, Jim's on the teaching team, Gary's on the teaching team, Del's on the team, and I would hope that eventually every one of your institutions is able to offer this. It's well funded and well organized by the Max McGraw Wildlife Foundation and the Wildlife Management Institute. We do have a 10-minute DVD of the program we're going to hook up on Del's computer here later this afternoon if you want to see what it's all about, but just watch for it. "Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow" from my standpoint, and Gary and I have been doing similar things on our own at our own institutions for years, it is the single most rewarding thing I do in the course of a year. It's a really cool program, and the students love it.

Finally, to a degree we do control our own future, and if we screw this up we have nobody to blame but ourselves. As somebody said yesterday, this is a great job. I can't imagine the last 28 years that I could have been doing anything different that I might have enjoyed more or felt I could have made more of a contribution, at least in Wisconsin and in some cases maybe over a larger scale. It's a great job— hang on to it. Good luck, and do good work.

Group Discussion

Gary San Julian: Well, you've heard a lot of different opinions. You've heard some commonality, you've heard some things you may want to challenge, some things you may want to agree with. It's in your hands, and for the next five minutes I'd like to open it up to questions for our panel or for comments, and then we'll take a picture and have a break. Then we're going to break into 4 groups and when we come back we'll pull our discussions together and finally put down some solid, concrete things that will be done.

Question: (Joe) I suggest we think more in the political arena and along the things at our schools that we can use to accomplish our goals. In your opening views you alluded to the "ag mafia". I think that's a terrific model for us to follow. I've tried to follow it in my current position as District Extension Director. I have 13 counties and 80 different county faculty. For example: What I do every year is profile the state legislators in south Florida, which is a majority of the state legislators. We go on line and look at their profiles and at least one of those that I can think of right now, is hobbies: hunting and fishing; her district is Miami-Dade, a highly urbanized district. So I called the department chair and told him this person needed to be on his advisory committee. These people have influence and are people that can help your program.

Another example: In Martin County we had a problem filling in the county director position, so I was the Acting County Director and that gave me an opportunity to act with the local politics. I went on line again, we have a URL site that lists the political donors. These are the people with power- they can call the Governor, the state legislators and say, "I gave to \$5000 for you to run, and here's what I want you to do for me in return." I cross-referenced that to our alumni list in that county and sent out letters to about 1200 people inviting them to the front door of their alma mater, and told them what we can offer them, whatever department they came from, history or English or whatever, that whatever we could do for them, we were there for them. This was a broad invitation, so now we have master gardeners, volunteer people, people on our advisory committee and other people like that who have now learned about Extension, people with power we have educated about Extension in general.

I kind of built a cadre and used some of those people during the last legislative session. One of the local legislators was on the appropriations committee. I had them give this guy a call and tell him to fund our budget. I don't know if that had the political influence to get it done or not, but I was fortunate to have 3 new positions in the county faculty in my district. I talked with the county Extension officer in one county and informed him he had to get his 'ducks in a row.' Which commissioners like your program, which ones do you have to educate, where are the people with power in your community who have influence over those local commissioners? So, they worked on them, I got one of the commissioners football tickets to the Gator game, interacted with the VP and the Extension Dean, and that might have had some influence. I had some people from the community write letters to the Extension Dean, and lo and behold we have a new position here. We used the "ag mafia" to get a family consumer science position. Because we went to the "ag mafia" to convince them it was needed for their people, we were able to get it done.

I see a lot of opportunities to use the "ag mafia" model. We're doing great with innovative programming, no problem there, but in order to get the support from our institutions, the state legislators and county government, I think we really need to focus on this as one of the things we can use.

Another person said he doesn't like the words "ag mafia" because it carries bad connotations. I see agriculture as more than just another economic development opportunity because it's what develops food. I think it's a lot more important than some of the others we've been talking about at this conference for other opportunities for. Nebraska is a real tough-core agricultural state where we have Extension educators, we have scientists and are now working on alternative agricultural production methods that give more to wildlife in diversified systems, and there are many problems with intense agriculture. I think we have to look at them a little differently because it is food, and food drives people. If it comes down to food vs. something else it's going to be very important to have food included in the recipe.

Jim: I agree with these last statements, and I think we want to be “invited to the party”, not “crash it.” Once we get into an “ag mafia” type of mentality, people are going to get mad and I think we are going to be perceived as someone trying to take something away from somebody else, and that’s not the way we want to go. I’ve heard an idea going around about forming a national committee of Extension people and I think that would be an excellent thing to do to get our message out, and ask them what can we do for them

Tom compared his perception of the ‘mafia’ to how the game of football has changed over the years, learning ways to make more yardage per play and saving the wear and tear on the players who had no energy left towards the end of the game. So they moved away from that point of contention and looked to other opportunities to advance. All of a sudden they discovered the option, the pass, etc. The point is, if we put ourselves up us being against the ag interests we will lose. That’s not the battle we want. What we want is to advance our cause and not to do it at anyone else’s expense but to find those ways and avenues and other kinds of plays that will get us beyond the line of scrimmage. If ag comes with us as they ought to, great- they’re a welcome participant. But I don’t think we want to give them the control over the fate of our programs. They’re too important, and food security is entirely dependent upon whether ag programs are sustainable. Well, we know a lot more about sustainability than conventional production agriculture does. We have a lot to offer there. So we need to make sure we have a place at the table. Those are the types of things we should be involved with but at the same time we need to be creative about finding other ways to advance our cause other than using the old models others have developed.

Paul said the issue of ag has now transitioned in his career to being whole land management. I can tell you most of the farmers in Louisiana will not make it, be viable, if they don’t take advantage of all those natural resources in addition to growing rice. I think we’ve integrated where expertise in wildlife resources becomes integral to the viability of agriculture. That’s the way I see it. Whether it’s a hunting lease enterprise, a crawfish pond or nature-based tourism or bird-watching experience, they see it now as being something that has economic viability for them to maintain. The big benefit of the entire population is food production, so I see it as blended very well but an ag agronomist won’t know the expertise you know, so you’ll have to work with that person.

An agent is going to see the difference. He’s going to walk out into a forum and a grower is going to ask questions about a duck lease, how do you get water fowl, can I grow crawfish, I’ve got some land on the back 40 and I’d like to start some hunting operations, and

By time we leave on Wednesday, we’re going to draft a letter to the Extension Director, or whatever we decide to do as a group, we’re going to have a good start on that and we’re going to have people taking responsibility of doing tasks to make sure we get this accomplished.

Ron iterated that people that hunt and fish need to be brought into the fold and something I noticed recently is that some of our administrators are retiring, and many times the gifts they get are a fishing pole or a gun or sports-related trip, and all through their career they ignored things that really make a difference in habitat. I think Greg’s point of talking with your administrators with the hope of making a link between what brings them happiness (hunting and fishing and outdoor experiences) and the fact what we are doing as a system makes a huge negative impact on that. I think we can we can pull together some of those points and let the “aha!” happen.

Jim Rice took the opportunity with some people at NC State to take the Dean and the Director of Extension out fishing and they got a little “green”, but we got our position out of that one.

I’ve been struggling with a question in my mind and maybe someone at the table here can address is. Some of the issues we talked about seem to be concerns about the future of Extension as a whole, but then much of it is about the future of fish and wildlife Extension and it occurs to me that this is an extremely biased group here. We recognize the importance of what we do. The administrative personnel we have among us are biased- they all have ties to fisheries and wildlife. When I think about NC State, the fisheries and wildlife is a burr on the tail of Extension because most of our counties have livestock people and we have crop people, but we don’t have any county where someone can focus on fisheries and wildlife. This is a pretty common thing and I don’t think our administration, aside from Ed, that has a feel for what we do and

what the value of it is, so how do we address that gap? We can sit and talk about our own impact, etc., but we're way back from the other end of the dog and how are we going to get their attention and show them the value?

We've have a long tradition and a good heritage in Extension and it was built on the agricultural commodities and how we dealt with that, and fisheries and other wildlife things were off to the side. For that to change, 1) the administrators need to know what you do and how well you do it, and 2) they need to hear from your partners about how well you do what you do and how much more help you need. That's when I begin to see the conversations starting to take place, because if that doesn't happen, then it's not just going to appear automatically with all the things that are going on.

We're fortunate in Louisiana that we have a sea grant program and about 8 county Extension agents that work a lot in the fisheries/natural resource area, so I don't see the need to have a fish and wildlife service agent if a specialist is doing a good job of training the county agents in the areas they need to be trained in, and if it's an important focused program for the clientele then I think it is something you have to bring to them in a viable way through our Extension network we already have. I'm not saying you don't need any. Our 5-area forestry agents work extensively on wildlife, not just forestry, so there is still some connection to forestry-wildlife agent focusing in a regional way on wildlife and fisheries resources as well. I think with the reality of the budgets we have lost in the last 7 years (we've eliminated 114 agent positions), so we're not going to have a lot more people coming on board. We're going to need a smarter county agent who is much more in tune with the needs of the county. I think fish and wildlife resources are a need in every county except New Orleans and Louisiana where it is pretty much all urbanized or flooded, and we will make sure they have a delivery system with your expertise using the internet and distance education and the traditional field days and training we provide and make sure the clientele that demand this (and there are a lot of them that want this information) come to the table. You've got to make the connection, you've got to build a program, you need to be trusted, you need to know who the influential people are and I think you'll bring them to the table and have outstanding programs if we're guided with good technical information from the campus.

Going back to the playbook again, we are not going to play the game of having a county agent in every county doing fisheries and wildlife services. That's someone else's strategy. Our strategy is the kind of thing that Paul and Ed have talked about where you basically create agents. You create educators by educating crop or ag educators, or family and consumer science educators who can carry the message for you. They may be working with families and they can help you get in where there is an interest in fish as a food item. There are a lot of ways you can build that capacity.

What we've done at Michigan State University is to create these areas of expertise teams where we have educators and specialists who come together around program areas. We have a fish and wildlife area of expertise team. The educators that are on that team are from all kinds of program areas, we have some who are ag and natural resource, some who are 4-H, some are from family programs, and some come from community development, so we're creating agents in that way. Then create your volunteers, like Marty's master naturalist program, 150 people. No one is going to have 150 fisheries and wildlife educators in any state, but he has 150 volunteers who are doing some of the work of an educator. Again, you have people who have a lot of passion about this and if you provide them with the tools they can do some of those jobs for us that we don't get done by the traditional educator role we see in ag.

I agree with what you've been saying, and I wasn't saying the solution is to have a fish and wildlife agent in every county. What I was saying is from the perspective of our administration, when they look out at the community of specialists and issues and everything, it's an issue in every county with all the commodity groups and cloudy issues and things like that, and I don't think they even know how to think about us. We're over here on the side and our wagon is hooked to their mule team so how we are going to influence that and get their attention so they know what we do and how much we leverage despite not having agents in counties is important. That is what I see as crucial.

A crop association, a top organization of crop consultants, came to my office and said they needed some technical training. I asked for their priorities and it was hunting lease enterprises- it wasn't agronomy, it wasn't how to raise soy beans or how to deal with soybean rust, so I think there's an audience there with our consultants, as well, who we have to work with. And they can help tremendously in spreading the word because apparently they get into questions and they're seeing the need for that fish and wildlife enterprise.

Darrell mentioned that Tom had said earlier there were three major issues we were dealing with. One is the lack of federal Extension support, and I agree wholeheartedly with that. The other two I don't necessarily agree in terms of our state and I think there are lessons to be learned from that. One is the university administration devaluing Extension and we've had tremendous support from our university administration. One of the major ways that's come about is by our leadership, our dean and director of Extension, interacting with the president of the university. We've got county conversations on an annual basis, so our president is coming out and meeting with our counties and all the Extension people, so we're right there at the table.

Then also every time we have new faculty hires, the president leads the university new faculty tour around the state and they visit at least at one county Extension office so they can get familiar with what Extension does, and that really goes far. The last thing is the federal, state and county government losing resources. Paul said that's not the case in the county at least, and it's been the case with us, too. At the state level we maintain very strong relationships with the fish and game department, our state agency as well as with forest and lands, and that resulted in general funds being allocated through legislation of a quarter of a million dollars a year on a permanent, on-going basis so if you can maintain that relationship and build those bridges I think that will go far towards explaining and continuing to support our Extension wildlife and fisheries programs.

Someone in the audience asked the panel to explain about the traditional method of specialists working directly with county agents to reach clientele since, as mentioned, there aren't agents in all counties that are focused on fisheries and wildlife needs and have a whole slew of other responsibilities; hence, we often don't have the opportunity to work with all these people. He then added that what they need to do, or at least what he has done, is that he's reached out to other partners for my Extension agents' responsibilities. Of course, this has raised a lot of eye brows from administration, and I do want the agents to be the experts. I've reached out to research centers and other agencies that actually hire departmental educators to work with the agents.

Someone asked the panel to address what the current status of the NPL leadership position is now. Tom responded by saying that at the present time they are looking at temporary fill of a part-time, possible retiree and that there'll be more discussion about a permanent position over the next year. He sees I don't see leadership coming from CSRES right now. There is a vacuum, and I don't see that vacuum being filled to our expectations. In the near term, we have a need for leadership and I think when you have a group of people with a common need for communication and coordination, etc., there's nothing to keep that group from doing it itself. One of the powerful things Arlin Leholm got us doing at MSU was recognizing that self-directed work teams can do a lot more than permission from administrators can accomplish. That's the assertive step that I see this group being able to take for the long term, to develop leadership here if the agency finds value in that in the future it's ready-made for them. They can pick from that group to have a person, but in the meantime we don't give that up that leadership.

Jim shared a letter from Dick McCabe, Executive Vice President, Wildlife Management Institute and a long time ag supporter regarding the continuation of the National Program Leader position, along with similar letters from the Fish and Wildlife Director and the Wildlife Society. To his knowledge, to date there has been no response from Gayle Buchannan or Colien Hefferan. He just wanted the group to know this.

The position was originally established in 1936, filled for one year, vacated, not filled again until 1969 and filled for less than one year, vacated and not filled again until 1979 when Jim came into the position. Jim stayed there 22 years and had the opportunity to move into administration and made a personal and professional decision to not do that, because he loved what he was doing, working with the state

specialists and with the programs in natural resources. The point is not what he personally did, but what any of the group, as experienced and knowledgeable and committed wildlife professionals would have done in that job. I can't tell you how much the reaction and the coalition of the natural resource community in Washington means to what you folks do. The increased visibility, the opportunity for grants that you may or may not have known about, the opportunity for leadership, the opportunity for participation in national conferences, the increased visibility it gave, not for me, but for the programs. That's what's important about this position. I don't know how to summarize it any better for you.

That position, not Jim, but that position whether it was at the national level or something we created, was the communication link to all of us. It provided us information about upcoming programs, about jobs, it gave us that information for our administrators when we needed a new position (this is the format, this is the template). When that position changed a call went out for people. There were several people interviewed who decided for whatever reasons, not to take these positions. It was advertised again, buy the advertisement the second time went out for one week only, and I think there were two people who applied. It was pretty much known that Dr. Menzel would get that position. Bruce sat in that position for 2-3 years, but the communication level was never the same. We did not get the information transferred like we had before. Bruce was supposed to attend this conference and bring the message, but retired just a short while ago and could not attend. For the last 3 years there has not been that communication link among us. What it also provided us was the visibility, because that position interacted with all the major natural resource agencies in D.C. and kept us at the forefront in what we did and enabled us to get money and funding for programs across all our disciplines. This position reported to the deputy administrator of CSREES.

Lee said he can't remember the number of times he received a letter from Jim Miller that said he found out about an administrative meeting in some agency that was going on the next day and nobody had notified Lee about, but it affects all of you in some way and he was going to that meeting. In particular, there was legislation being considered that would have required all of us in cooperative Extension and wildlife to have a decision making role in the allocation of financial resources to wildlife projects on the ground, similar to what NRCS has now. This is the role in Washington now that apparently administration doesn't want refilled.

Next, we will divide into 4 groups and in 45 minutes pull together what Del said. At each level, what do you expect, how can we do it, what is the strategy, what are the bullets, because if you heard in this last 10 minutes the leadership in D.C. is probably not as strong as it was or ever will be again. Our fate rests in our hands.