

EDITORIAL

WILDLIFE FROM THE MOSQUITO CONTROL VIEWPOINT¹

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In the execution of a mosquito control program, many correlated factors must be considered, wildlife being one. Each of the many controlling factors must be evaluated so that in the formulation of basic control plans, those values may be considered and weighed against the whole.

I think it safe to say that no public mosquito control program is ever established unless the health or pest index justifies the appropriation and expenditure of public funds. Once organized and in operation, it is a matter of public trust to administer the program in a manner compatible with the general public's interest. The conservation of wildlife values is certainly a matter of public concern; however, it is recognized that the value the general public attaches to wildlife conservation varies considerably with the locality.

The direction and operation of a mosquito control program requires many skills sometimes concentrated in one person or spread over a number of individuals. In addition to administration, these skills include engineering, entomology, and public relations.

I think it would be generally agreed that the great majority of those directing mosquito control programs are sportsmen who would not knowingly or intentionally approve a project that would materially destroy a wildlife resource. Yet untrained in wildlife fundamentals, the problem facing the mosquito control director is just what constitutes a wildlife resource; what its value or weight is in his particular locality

and what steps might be taken to maintain that value yet accomplish his objective. In many cases, the mosquito control director is confused by the levels and nature of the attacks on the program, the majority of which might be classified as destructive criticism, without the most minute offer of assistance. These stem from, in most cases, local groups of naturalists, organic gardeners and the like who are dedicated to holding the "status quo" in face of the values associated with the public good. In some few instances State Fish and Game Departments have presented a position difficult to compromise. Consequently, confusion tends to reign, tempers are ruffled and the spirit of cooperation seeks a more congenial atmosphere.

It is not unusual for the mosquito control executive to seek advice from consultants in specialty fields such as law, engineering or accounting. Therefore, in those areas where wildlife conservation is supported by a vigorous minority, State or Federal agencies should be in a position to supply competent advisors to assist in the fair appraisal of the wildlife resource and to advise in the preparation of control plans.

This necessitates the acceptance by wildlife interests that mosquito control is highly organized by State, Regional and National Associations that are constantly striving to upgrade the profession and to establish a uniformity of plan and operation based on research and sound experience. Furthermore, the wildlife interests should recognize that, as a public function, mosquito control must produce a reasonable reduction in the annoyance level or face public disfavor and extinction. In most cases,

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mosquito control is performed only on private lands, consequently the character and degree of control is often dependent on ownership requirements that may limit the scope of cooperation. When those private lands become public, the responsibility for mosquito control passes to the new ownership.

By the same token, mosquito control must recognize that fish and wildlife preservation are also in the public interest, and consistent with established values they must be maintained and supported. Therefore, in the consideration of every mosquito control project, the question of the fish and wildlife value attached to it must be answered.

To this end we must admit a certain ignorance. But where do we seek advice? From those we believe have unfairly attacked our program or whose minds are closed to reasonable compromise? No. As public officials we must seek our answer in the top echelon of Federal and State Conservation Services. Here is where uniform policies may be established; here facilities for research and educational work is available; here should come the answers in usable form.

The stage has now been set by this Association, in cooperation with the Fish and Wildlife Service, for the formation of a National Committee representing both interests for the purpose of establishing methods of coordination, at top level, for the guidance of our workers. Through guided research and the formulation of manuals, it is hoped that a mutual appreciation of purpose will develop for the betterment of both services.

So in conclusion, we must hold that mosquito control serves a multiple public function and through years of research and investigation has developed basic standards and procedures. For its own guidance it has established State, Regional and National Associations. Mosquito control recognizes that wildlife conservation has a definite public value and wishes to conserve that value consistent with the various local requirements. Mosquito control looks to the State and Federal conservation agencies for cooperation, through research, to establish those values, to assist in the formulation of large scale plans, to assume responsibilities for uniform policies and the practice of mosquito control on their own lands.

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