

TOWARD CENTURY 21 - A MOOSE MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT: Toward Century 21 - the moose resource for the remainder of the century will be subjected to ever increasing pressure from a myriad of anthropogenic sources. The intent of this paper is to challenge and stimulate moose biologists, the public (naturalists, Treaty Indians and hunters) and industry to become involved in a co-operative management venture to ensure that the resource is available for future generations. New ventures, new ideas and new partners in moose management are a prerequisite for moose management as the 20th century draws to a close.

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Toward Century 21 - as moose biologists we find ourselves before a large forest with a single option; proceed as best we can, avoiding the pitfalls and wrong turns. There are no freeways, no paved roads, no trees blazed, only windfalls, areas to be avoided and those where we must tread cautiously. Which way to go? We are rich from past travel in the unmarked forests, and hopefully, the experience will serve us well as we move on. The words of Oliver Wendell Holmes are noteworthy: 'The great thing in this world is not so much where we stand, as in what direction are we moving?'

The above scenario is applicable to moose (*Alces alces*) management in many respects and I truly believe we are moving ahead. The moose resource for the remainder of this century will be subjected to ever increasing pressures from a myriad of sources. These will be intermixed with politics, lack of funding, misinformed users, lack of involvement of the public in management and priority use issues that make contemporary moose management something that was not conceived by the architects of this conference in the 60's. Have we made progress since Karns challenged us in 1975? I know we have but I am still left with the nagging feeling that much more could have been accomplished. Have we shown leadership? Is our posture proactive or reactive? Is there a problem? Is it politics? funding? lack of initiative? insecurity in what we're about?

We all have most likely been party to

discussions on subjects such as modeling, browse surveys, harvest surveys, bulls only regulations and limited entry seasons, plus others which are still current and important topics. But we seem to have ventured little into new territory. Why? Are we hamstrung by bureaucracy, who in turn are concerned about public perception or the risks when straying too far from tradition to examine new ground? Are we too heavily burdened with daily demands that make "quiet time" for creative thinking impossible? Concern has been expressed that new ideas and initiatives are often laid aside because of perceived adverse public reaction and the unwillingness to gamble; the result is lost initiative. It is unfortunate indeed when administrators suggest the idea machine be turned off. The questions by Karns (1975) namely, 'are we truly wildlife scientists and managers or bureaucrats with a passing interest in wildlife? And what of our role in society?' are still relevant today. Are we still thinking in the past and consequently reluctant to change? Many are working to bring about changes in the way we manage, attempting to lead the pack so to speak. But, too many have turned the idea machine off. They seem to be comfortable with a 'laissez-faire' existence and, as such, feel secure in what they are about. Risks are largely unknown. Canadians as a whole have told us (Filion *et al.* 1982) that they want their resources managed and I suggest that similar opinions exist in other

countries. This implies change is not only necessary but imperative.

How do we deal with public needs, demands and expectations including the sensitive ones? Moose management programs will become more complex especially with the all encompassing issue of increased access. As the demands for forest products grow, it is inevitable that the problem will be compounded. How do we involve the public in this management conundrum? It is not their problem you say - let us not forget that we are stewards of the public's resources and that an effective management program is one that has widespread if not universal public support. What about education programs regarding moose directed at the youth of today - do you have one? When is the last time you communicated with this part of society about moose biology? The educational process is fundamental to public support.

Management programs are also contingent upon funding - a fundamental issue but one on which we have not done a good job being creative and examining new revenue generating opportunities.

Having agreed to address the issue, I now find myself open to criticism for being outspoken, having to 'face the music' so to speak. However, the intent is to put forth ideas and suggestions that may kindle the smouldering embers and assist us in travelling through the forest. I am certain each of you has pondered the issues and where to go. Nevertheless, I believe we must challenge and search for new ideas, escape from the tunnel vision syndrome, look at the entire picture and use available resources to maximize our efforts. Respecting users, the same can be said of them. For example, licenced hunters have a tendency to forget about tomorrow, forget about other resource users such as photographers, viewers, Treaty Indians and measure success by what is in the deep freeze. Hunters also fail to recognize the legitimacy of subsistence use. They want the opportunity to hunt moose but again fail to recognize that this

opportunity must also be given to native people. Hunters often times fail to recognize wilderness experiences which includes the satisfaction garnered from seeing moose interact with their environment as a legitimate and bona fide use. Conversely, viewers and photographers also fail to recognize the legitimacy of recreational hunting. A strong polarization exists because of these philosophical differences and, as a result, the real object of our affection, the moose resource, does not get the attention justly deserved but is lost in the plethora of rhetoric.

The issue of subsistence use of moose by Treaty Indians is a thorny and politically explosive issue. In the three Canadian prairie provinces, this is the one issue that is probably paramount in the minds of most biologists because of the unfettered access to the resource afforded Native peoples by the Natural Resources Transfer Agreement. This issue will be further exacerbated by Bill C31 which will result in thousands of individuals becoming Treaty Indians. Subsistence users must recognize the legitimacy of other users and that the moose resource can only withstand so much exploitation before something gives. All must recognize that moose are far from existing in inexhaustible quantities. Modern conveniences have given these users better access to the resource and thus, a much greater impact may result than was imagined 50 years ago. Native people must recognize that there are many social benefits to controlling or limiting their take of the resource. In other words, it's time that biologists and all users joined hands to work in a spirit of cooperation and communication for the benefit of the resource - all, including the moose resource have much to gain from this renewed association. Should all of our time be wasted on events that resulted in populations declining to the low levels seen in the last few years or, can we be more productive in determining what the corrective surgery should be? Subsistence users should recognize the benefits of having ample numbers of moose on the

landscape particularly the economic, cultural, and sustenance aspects.

There are some excellent examples in Manitoba of what has become a popular phrase namely, co-management. In these examples, Treaty Indians are actively involved in two moose management, one elk management, and one caribou management Board with more involvement anticipated in the future - all positive steps that did not come about without substantial work and commitment but more importantly, the desire and recognition that the future of the specific resource and traditional uses are contingent upon this co-management. It is unfortunate that the actions of a few are presently undermining the spirit and intent of some of these Boards as well as traditional uses and the economic opportunities that might accrue to specific bands. It is noteworthy that some bands have placed hunting restrictions on themselves and have approached the Manitoba Department of Natural Resources expressing a desire to become more actively involved in management programs. One consideration worthy of merit is for bands to reduce their domestic use by a specified amount and turn this reduction over to economic development on specific reserves. They must also recognize that abuses of the rights afforded them has many social ramifications. I believe a more positive feeling toward Treaty Indians would occur if there was a more demonstrable effort on the part of all Bands to become part of a 'team approach'. The perception of co-operation must be illustrated with a positive response. There is an old saying that 'necessity knows no law' - this will not apply to those who take animals and sell them for profit. Government attempts to ensure that Native people are supplied with the necessities of life but Natives cannot be allowed to violate the laws and destroy moose, their own 'goose that lays the golden egg'.

Management problems have taken the form of die-offs, overharvest, different uses,

predation, differing philosophies (i.e. inter Department, public desires versus government priorities), subsistence use, commercial use, inefficient funding, lack of data, lack of public support, lack of management plans, other disciplines and yes, politics at all levels. There is also a tendency by wildlife biologists to assume a possessive attitude toward wildlife management in their respective jurisdiction. If moose are to be managed effectively, users must be involved in the decision making process that determines priority use. It is recognized that by virtue of legal obligations that these may be a given but then the challenge is to find alternative solutions to solve identifiable problems. In order to better manage moose, all users must be involved and managers must be active in soliciting this involvement. Management Boards are recommended as a way of addressing user concerns in management decisions and of ensuring user accountability rather than this being thrust squarely on the professional manager. In this case, accountability can make some interesting 'bed partners'.

Responsible moose management must be based on sound scientific knowledge but unfortunately, it is often clouded with politics. Managers must be willing to compromise with some of the political pressures and still achieve management objectives. This may require a longer time frame than we might desire but, it could eventually bring politics into the 'team'. Maybe, just maybe, politicians are becoming more cognizant of the need for a more conscientious effort in wildlife management and as responsible managers, we must not lessen our convictions, efforts and initiative in illustrating as effectively as possible the consequences of a 'laissez-faire' attitude. I reference a statement made by Canada's Minister of External Affairs in the Winnipeg Free Press on January 31, 1988 in which he stated that once only a 'fashionable issue' the damage to the world's wildlife, water, air and land is as urgent as nuclear arms control and he then touched on

such topics as beluga whales and breeding grounds of the barren-ground caribou. These and other issues have not been treated with much conviction by politicians in the past. Such a change in political attitude is essential to our future generations. The public can be an ally in encouraging this change and an ally in the sense that they can do and say what civil servants cannot say or fear to say.

Future management plans must be designed to fulfill government responsibilities to the public not only for today but also for tomorrow. In Manitoba, government has recognized its future mandate and although somewhat of a motherhood issue it is addressed by policy namely, 'that appropriate use is made of wildlife and that the resource is passed on to future Manitobans in at least as vigorous a state as it was received by our generation'.

Although it is difficult to communicate with those with fundamentally different philosophies, Decker and Brown (1987) have suggested wildlife professionals must understand the views of all so that we can develop a management philosophy that is in the best interests of society and a philosophy that can be communicated to the general public or to more specific interest groups. Managers must understand the role of the moose resource in Native culture and other aspects of society must recognize and appreciate this. One of the biggest problems in Canada today is cultural identity and all too often the role of resources in many cultures is overlooked or downplayed. The various cultures on the other hand must recognize the legitimacy of other uses. In a nutshell, we must all appreciate the position of the other, that we have identical goals and that communication and respect will help immeasurably in blazing a trail through that forest that others can follow.

Traditional wildlife management is being challenged by animal rights advocates (Decker and Brown, 1987). They suggest that an important first step is to examine the basis

for traditional wildlife management. As moose biologists we need to re-evaluate these assumptions that may be taken for granted as we have studied moose, interpreted research results and apply this new knowledge in management. What also is required is the need to communicate this information to users. This self or peer criticism is a prerequisite to deal effectively with the anti-management arguments of animal rights advocates. They pursue the neutral majority. We must ascertain if the 'neutrals' relate to our perception of management or side with that of the animal rights groups. Do we see ourselves as representing the best interest of all society? If yes (and hopefully it is yes), we should make it known. Toward this end, an educated public is an ally. One must ponder at decisions made which lessen our ability to communicate - such thinking smacks of being in a rut, of thinking in the past and an inability to recognize our allies, who we serve, and the rightful owners of the resource.

The economic situation today dictates that we will not be flush with funds over the next decade. It is imperative therefore that we use our imagination and leaving no stone unturned, attempt to generate new funds via new ideas. In this field, we are limited only by our imagination. In Canada politics can limit revenue opportunities especially when it comes to ear-marking funds. Governments are generally opposed to this concept, perhaps with good reason, however, it should be explored to ascertain if variations of this idea are saleable. Marketing might be an effective way of raising funds. Lotteries are a possibility. Look at the funds that were raised by California in 1987 when they had their first sheep hunt. I believe that the public would be willing to donate dollars if they knew that the funds would go directly to the resource. An excellent example of this is the funds we were able to generate for this conference from corporate citizens and private individuals. Ideas to be considered are a Canadian Moose Foundation that could be patterned after the

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. You know the success this group has had. Hunters represent only a small fraction of all users. It is imperative that we develop programs that involve the non-consumptive users as well. This involvement should make the funding of programs more secure.

Efficient use of the media is essential to get our story across to the public. Most people are readily attracted to wildlife stories, especially big game. There is something charismatic and appealing about big game that catches the public eye. This has been recognized by the media professionals and moose biologists have much to gain by exploring these opportunities. Perhaps we need to view ourselves like businessmen with a product and get on with marketing it.

Regarding the impact of other disciplines on the moose resource, it is time for us and administrators to recognize this. Perhaps moose will benefit more by having us participate in forestry symposiums such as the one recently held in Alberta on mixed forest management. Generally, requests to attend such events are denied by those not fully appreciative of the potential benefits that may accrue.

I would terminate these few outspoken words by stating with firm conviction that we have progressed through many forests in our understanding of the complex inter-relationship of moose with the environment. We still have a great distance to go and much to learn in a relatively short period of time. We have however, in some areas, more than just scratched the surface. In the complicated management aspect we are faced with critical decisions to make, the results of which will be left for years. Tomorrow does not belong to us but it is imperative that we plan for it so that the obligations we have to those of the future will be met. The reality is today and it will have a decisive impact upon us and the moose resource if we have a planned strategy. Hopefully, all society can and will see the benefit of working co-operatively with governments who are interested in moose management

because it is the governments of today (at all levels) that are responsible for the future well-being of the species. In looking at where we've been, where we are now, and the forest ahead, hopefully you can be stimulated into looking at new ideas, new ways of doing things, new concepts and most importantly, how to challenge government with a will to work more diligently and with more conviction for the welfare of the moose resource and thus its future and benefits to society. Contemporary management means today, not the past. We must learn from the experiences of the 30's, 40's and 50's. Now, let us proceed in a new spirit of co-operation and sincere interest at all levels. I would leave all interested in moose management, especially the owners of the resource, the simple little phrase 'get involved - it's your game'.

Perhaps as a new start for the 'moose group' it is time to become more formal, develop a mission objective and decide how we as a group can work toward overcoming the problems faced. It is recommended that those attending the 25th North American Moose Conference appoint a working group with the task of developing by 1990 a more formalized strategy for the 'moose group'. I believe as a group we have the expertise, the professionalism and the commitment to be an influential force - let us not lose the opportunity that is there for the taking.

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