

TOWARD CENTURY 21: A 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 - we find ourselves before a large forest with a single option - proceed - 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 apropos in this scenario namely, 'The great thing in this world is not so much where we stand, as in what direction are we moving?'

The above scenario is akin 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 many anthropogenic sources. These will be intermixed with politics, lack of funding, poor public attitudes, 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 the conference in the 60's. Have we made progress since 1975 when Karns (1975) challenged us? I know we have but I am still left with the nagging feeling that much more could have been accomplished. Have we taken a leadership role and a proactive stance versus a reactive one? What is the problem - is it politics? funding? lack of initiative? security in what we're about?

Each of us has most likely been party to discussions on such subjects as modeling, browse surveys, harvest surveys, bull only and limited entry seasons, plus others which are still current and important topics but we seem to have strayed little into new territory. Are we hamstrung by bureaucracy, who in turn are concerned about perception or straying off the set course to examine new ground? 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 of which is lost initiative. It is poor people management for administrators to suggest the idea machine be turned off. The question posed 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 - reluctant to change? Many

are working at change, attempting to lead the pack but, too many have turned the idea machine off, are caught in a 'laissez-faire' existence' and too secure in what they are about.

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.

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?

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 - 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. On the other hand, viewers and photographers fail to recognize the legitimacy of recreational hunting - in other words, a strong polarization exists based on philosophical differences and in the ensuing confusion the real object of our affection, the moose resource, does not get the attention deserved but is lost in the plethora of rhetoric.

The issue of subsistence use i.e. that 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 these people by such documents as the Natural Resources Transfer Agreement. This issue will be further exacerbated by Bill C51 which will result in 1,000's 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 types of users access to the resource and thus, a much greater impact 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 co-operation and communication for the benefit of the resource - all, including the moose resource have much to gain from this renewed association. Should all 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 on the horizon - 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 Department with a request to get 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 the '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. We all recognize the problems of reserve life as well as the problems native people have off the reserve. Government attempts to ensure that native people are supplied with the necessities of life but they 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 vs government; 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 although 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. 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 touched on such topics as beluga whales and breeding grounds of the barren-ground caribou - these and other issues have in the past not been treated with the necessary conviction by politicians essential to passing them on to future generations. Political change in attitude is essential and the public can be an effective tool, an ally in this respect as they can often do and say what we as civil servants cannot.

Future management plans must be designed to fulfill government responsibilities to the public today but also tomorrow. Within Manitoba, government has recognized the future and although a motherhood statement it is important that it is contained in 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 publics. 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 the assumptions that have been taken for granted as we have studied moose, interpreted research results and apply this new knowledge in management. This self or peer criticism is a prerequisite in dealing effectively with the anti-management arguments of animal rights advocates. They will pursue the neutral majority and after analyzing the situation, we must ascertain if the neutrals will relate to our perspective of management or that of 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 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 thus, it is imperative that we use our imagination and leave no stone unturned in attempts to generate new funds via new ideas. In this field, we are limited only by our imagination plus, at least in Canada again by politics when it comes to ear marking funds. Governments are opposed to this however, there is precedent for it. Marketing of our product might be an effective way of raising funds via lotteries. Look at the funds that were raised by California in 1987 when they had their first sheep hunt. I believe and this is confirmed by talking with the public that they would be willing to donate if they knew the funds were going 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 - hopefully, you know the success this group has had. Hunters represent a small fraction of all users thus, it is imperative to develop programs that involve non-consumptive users - this involvement will make more secure annual funding programs.

More efficient use of the media is essential to get our story across. Most 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 and as moose biologists we have much to gain by exploring these opportunities. Perhaps we need to view ourselves more like businessmen with a product and get on with selling the product. Regarding the impact of other disciplines on our resource, it is time for us and administrators to recognize this. Perhaps the moose resource will particularly 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, in some areas, more than just scratched the surface however, 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 for 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 government, in whose trust moose management has been placed and it is the governments of today at all levels who have a responsibility for the future. 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 also, to challenge government with the idea of working more diligently and with more conviction for the welfare of the resource and thus the future of all society. Contemporary management means today, not the past - we must learn from the past - the 30's, 40's and 50's are behind - 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 may be time to become more formal, develop a mission objective and decide how we as a group can work toward overcoming the problems faced. 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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