

THE NORTH AMERICAN WILDLIFE CONSERVATION MODEL

WHAT ARE THE “SEVEN PILLARS” OF CONSERVATION THAT MAKE UP THE NORTH AMERICAN MODEL OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION?

Pillar #1: Wildlife is held in Public Trust

In North America, natural resources and wildlife on public lands are managed by government agencies to ensure that current and future generations always have wildlife and wild places to enjoy.

Pillar #2: Prohibition on Commerce of Wildlife

Commercial hunting and the sale of wildlife is prohibited to ensure the sustainability of wildlife populations.

Pillar #3: Democratic Rule of Law

Hunting and fishing laws are created through the public process where everyone has the opportunity and responsibility to develop systems of wildlife conservation and use.

Pillar #4: Hunting Opportunity for All

Every citizen has an opportunity, under the law, to hunt and fish in the United States and Canada.

Pillar #5: Non-Frivolous Use

In North America, individuals may legally kill certain wild animals under strict guidelines for food and fur, self-defense and property protection. Laws restrict against the casual killing of wildlife merely for antlers, horns or feathers.

Pillar #6: International Resource

Wildlife and fish migrate freely across boundaries between states, provinces and countries. Working together, the United States and Canada jointly coordinate wildlife and habitat management strategies. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 demonstrates this cooperation between countries to protect wildlife. The Act made it illegal to capture or kill migratory birds, except as allowed by specific hunting regulations.

Pillar #7: Scientific Management

Sound science is essential to managing and sustaining North America's wildlife and habitats. For example, researchers put radio collars on elk to track the animals' movements to determine where elk give birth and how they react to motor vehicles on forest roads.

WHO PAYS FOR THE WILDLIFE CONSERVATION IN NORTH AMERICA?

Hunters and anglers provide the vast majority of funding through license fees and excise taxes. In 1934, Ding Darling created the artwork for the first Duck Stamp to raise funds to conserve vital wetlands. In 1937 sportsmen successfully lobbied congress to pass the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act which placed an excise tax on the sale of sporting arms and ammunition. So far, that act has generated more than \$2 billion for wildlife habitat conservation. In 1950, congress passed the Dingell-Johnson Act, the angler tax equivalent for restoring wild fish and conserving their habitat. Combined with annual sales of hunting and fishing licenses and tags, these taxes provide the lion's share of funding for wildlife in North America.

WHAT ARE THE TWO FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THE NORTH AMERICAN MODEL OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION?

1) Fish and wildlife belong to all Americans. Every citizen has the right to pursue them within legal limits. Nobody can exploit them for commercial gain. 2) We need to manage wildlife in ways that will sustain healthy populations forever. These principles are supported by seven pillars known as the Seven Sisters of Conservation.

HOW DID NORTH AMERICAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS WILDLIFE CHANGE THROUGH TIME?

In the early 1800s, North American settlers viewed wildlife as an inexhaustible resource that could never be depleted. Few people cared how much wildlife was killed or wasted. This callous attitude led to the extinction of many species and was nearly the doom of elk. Hunters eventually realized that to save what they loved they must embrace a code of honor and restraint, and the idea of fair chase was born. Along with the fair chase concept, sportsmen saw that commerce in wildlife had to end, and hunting needed to be regulated. It was time for the public to take responsibility for managing wildlife and wild country so that future generations would have the opportunity to savor them and carry on the hunting tradition.

HOW DO HUNTERS AND ANGLERS CONTRIBUTE TO CONSERVATION?

Sportsmen contribute more than \$1.1 billion per year in license fees paid to state fish and wildlife agencies. It's not just funding for huntable wildlife but all wildlife. Hunters and anglers have funded the majority of North American conservation efforts through license fees and taxes paid on hunting and fishing equipment. Perhaps the greatest triumph of all is the millions of dollars raised and millions of acres conserved by the members of nonprofit habitat conservation groups like the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and Ducks Unlimited. Every hour volunteered and every penny donated was freely given by hunters and anglers.

Sources:

Rocky Mt. Elk foundation www.rmef.org.

Wildlife Management Institute

Jones, Martin, Mark Duda and Andrea Criscione. *The Sportsman's Voice; Hunting and Fishing in America* 2010.

International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies; *Economic Importance of Hunting in America*, 2002