

Night, Night Hunters

I have just read an article on one of my favorite outdoor sites, **Sporting Classics Daily**. The article was titled, "Conservation Funding and Firearms" by Craig Springer, External Affairs, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Southwest Region.

I first read this article when I was in high school (over 60 years ago) when I was memorizing articles by Robert Ruark, and every item and its cost in the Herter's Catalog. Today, it has been perverted into propaganda meant to seduce any awareness in hunters, state wildlife agencies and hunter's organizations about what is happening to hunting and this once-proud program, the Pittman-Robertson Excise Tax on Arms and Ammunition. Whether you think this article to be a simple oversight, ignorance, a bid for a bonus or a bona fide deception: I leave to you.

While the article was true those many years ago and properly whetted a young man's imagination and energy toward hunting, shooting and possibly a job one day: today the article is a stale clip of a bygone era and a glimpse of how it is being used by that herd called "The Swamp" with their Hidden Agendas running amok. It details all the money collected and disbursed to State wildlife programs (the only beneficiaries, supposedly, of the funds) by law. It chirps about putting "gas in a biologist's truck" and "bobwhite quail traps in Oklahoma" giving the impression that the increased funding does as much or more than it did for Dad or Grandpa – nothing could be farther from the truth. The funding source itself, the use of the funds and the goals of the modern wildlife bureaucrats, both state and federal, being paid by the Excise Tax dollars are such today that a good case could be made that hunters and Rural America would be better off without the program entirely. Other than serving as one more good reason (of many) why the 2nd Amendment must be protected and preserved; the wildlife benefits to hunters and Rural America are, to quote Ross Perot describing the loss of jobs to NAFTA, "a giant sucking sound" off in the distance.

Let me describe some of the ways this once great program has been savaged and distorted:

1. In the early 1990's, Congress refused a Request from US Fish and Wildlife Service to authorize and fund the capture of Canadian wolves to release in the Rocky Mountains. When Congress refused, USFWS clandestinely "took" (stole is a better word) \$45 to 60 Million from the funds and released wolves into Yellowstone National Park (from which they spread in every direction). Leftover funds were used to open a USFWS Office in California that Congress had also refused to fund; and to give bonuses to USFWS managers involved in the illicit funding uses. When a GAO Audit revealed the misuse of the funds to a US House of Representatives Committee, after a flurry of activity ala Lois Lerner et al, the responsible USFWS managers went on to be Directors and high-paid Executives of environmental lobby groups. The state wildlife agency Directors that along with you, me and the state

wildlife programs never asked for the money to be replaced. I suggest that not only was this a visible flame 20 years ago of the advanced degree of corruption corroding the state/federal/radical groups "Complex" to use Ike's term: it was a clear signal to others like ATF in Fast and Furious, Lois Lerner in IRS, and the FBI/Federal Intelligence network in the past three years to, "do what you want, nobody gets in trouble anymore".

2. The program has been diverted into a quasi-preservation effort of government force on behalf of animal communities that while not in any trouble should get as much attention as game animals according to New Age wildlife "professionals". Think of it as a sort of socialism for critters wherein Excise tax (and license revenue) is forcibly taken from the management of those animals that "have" and given to those animals that "have not", somewhat like a progressive tax scheme that will ostensibly make everyone "equal". To say that game animals and hunting have not suffered greatly in this "Robin Hood-like redirection of the Excise taxes generated by Arms and Ammunition Sales" is simply an ideological rejection of truth and facts. This was made possible by some federal/state wordsmithing of regulations almost 30 years ago that no one, not even the NRA saw fit to oppose. Words like "game" were simply transformed to "wildlife" which in a legal sense covers a multitude of sins. When I read Mr. Springer's piece I looked to see how he would handle or avoid this fact. At the end of his long list (first written 60 years ago) about mule deer, bobwhite, et al; the last phrase was, and "habitats restored benefiting multitudes of organisms". Yo, anyone awake out there?
3. The Excise Tax funding and the License Revenue have been increasingly diverted in almost half the states and growing in recent years into Lawsuits, depredation Complaints, propagandizing incidences, denying the reason moose and elk (and their hunting) are disappearing, teaching kids prevarications about predators and generally concocting nonsense for public consumption like, "the wolf that attacked the young man had a 'deformed brain'" and "the moose season is closed forever because of climate change" (as though moose failed to adapt to eating coconuts and mangoes) because of forcibly imposed federal wolves laughingly called "Endangered" or "Threatened". This all costs millions of Excise Tax and License Revenue dollars that are purposely under-reported by unaudited state and federal agencies. My estimate of the under-reporting (as a former National Wildlife Refuge Operations Chief, Program Coordinator, Program Analysts and wildlife biologist) is that the state and federal agencies only report 25-30% of the costs and thereby minimize any signs of hunters and Rural Americans waking up to what is going on like Rip Van Winkle.
4. The current scam to further drain Excise Tax funding and dwindling hunting License Revenue is for the federal government to "Return Wolf Management" to the States. This is a comedy skit in more ways than one. Forcing wolves back into states where they were purposely and at great expense exterminated over a century ago and calling it "Returning Management" is reminiscent of the man that killed his mother and father and then threw himself on the mercy of the court as an orphan. In other words it takes a certain amount of chutzpah. States will now be expected to "Maintain Wolves"; answer depredation calls; pay (?) compensation; explain why game is disappearing without using the words "predator" or "wolf"; tell dog owners to keep their dogs in or on a leash or expect a wolf to kill or (in certain cases) to mate

with them; fight lawsuits; and pay for pre-determined research to explain why neither they nor the wolves are responsible for the ensuing chaos and safety concerns of Rural Americans from hunters to hikers, campers, birdwatchers, kids at school bus stops and older ladies walking to rural mailboxes or outbuildings. This means MORE Excise Tax Revenue and MORE of the dwindling (for reasons of human safety and disappearing game) Hunting License Revenue diverted not only away from game but to expand an agenda meant to do away with game, guns, hunting, ranching and a vibrant Rural America.

5. How many of these USFWS do-gooders are explaining that more gun controls and ammunition quotas will seriously defund state wildlife programs? Where are the state wildlife agencies and their political overlords spreading the same truths? Where have you seen any explanation of what all this diversion of funds is doing? Or what wolf management or non-game handouts are taking from hunting and game? What is the alternative after most game hunting Revenue is gone? When gun and ammunition purchase, importation and use is all but obliterated. Will we just close down the state agencies and simply have a federal wildlife authority funded from General revenue? For what purpose? Will states just start paying for the “biologist” and His/Her “truck and gas”? Why would anyone spend anything on deer or ducks or grouse? Why would anyone spend money on frogs or snakes? Where would any money come from year after year after year? When the wolf kills the dog or the grizzly bear kills the camper who does what in an unarmed Rural America? How? Who is responsible? Who has the answer?

This could be longer but my fingers are getting tired. I just opened my window onto a fine spring day to hear the reporters working on the Excise Tax/Hunting License Revenue issue; the future of state and federal wildlife programs; and the role of predators in our brave new world. I listened for the Hunting, Dog and Livestock organizations fighting gun and ammunition controls, wolves and federal grizzlies. I cupped my hands over my ears to hear the bureaucrats speaking out for the 2nd Amendment and what needs to be done about dwindling game animal populations. I leaned out to hear the state and federal politicians fighting for hunters, ranchers, dog owners and Rural America (what’s that, they sound like their cheering for the environmental extremists and animal rights radicals?) I tried to hear the honest scientists advocating sensible predator management, game animal use and management, and the establishment of compatible wildlife communities that enhance human rural communities rather than discouraging and diminishing them.

But, all I heard were crickets and besides, I am tired of reading 60 year-old articles about how good things are going out there so I might as well take a nap too.

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If you found this worthwhile, [please share it with others.](#) Thanks.

Jim Beers is a retired US Fish & Wildlife Service Wildlife Biologist, Special Agent, Refuge Manager, Wetlands Biologist, and Congressional Fellow. He was stationed in North Dakota, Minnesota, Nebraska, New York City, and Washington DC. He also served as a US Navy Line Officer in the western Pacific and on Adak, Alaska in the Aleutian Islands. He has worked for the Utah Fish & Game, Minneapolis Police Department, and as a

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