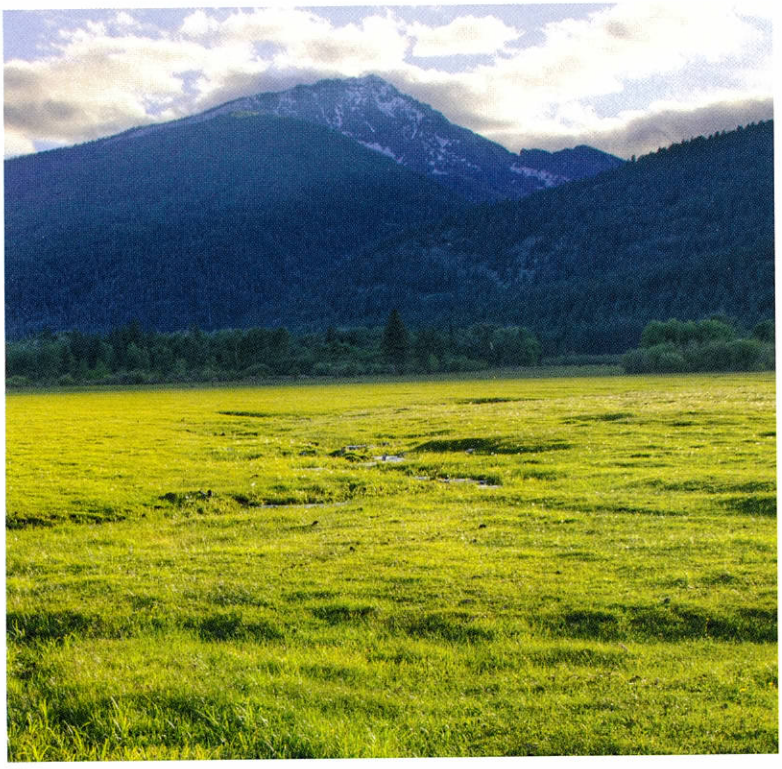
of the Sage Brush Rebellion, simplistic conceptions of ecosystem balance, and Agenda 21 as examples. At a more local level, uninformed aesthetic preferences of what, how, and why management occurs are frequent causes of conflict. The wildlife management importance of clear-cuts can be missed in stridently expressed aesthetic preferences for old-growth forests.

Perhaps the most persistent and pervasive issue facing public lands management is the growing divide among various user groups. Put otherwise, there is no longer a conservation community (if there ever was) that consistently works together for the benefit of public lands. Different user groups fight among themselves and with agency professionals over management strategies that favor some species (e.g., deer) or activities (e.g., hunting) over others (e.g., songbirds or bird-watching). This divide manifests in calls for more or better management, where "more" and "better" are usually code for sectarian expressions of self-interest. As well, because public lands are available to all and used for a range of wildlife-related and other recreational activities, there is the perception that the quality must be less than that of privately managed lands. John Gierach pointed out that a pond behind a fence is always more attractive.

One role that the Boone and Crockett Club can assume is the branding of conservation. Just as the word environmentalist lacks a clear definition, so too, conservation remains mostly in the eye of the beholder. The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation's fiduciary analogy of trustees, managers, and beneficiaries, while glib, is a poor description of day-to-day natural resources management. In the absence of some firm baseline, there is no easily defended starting point from which to judge what constitutes or does not constitute acceptable practice. Some clear compass of what fits within the definition of wise, sustainable use is increasingly important as natural resources become a centerpiece to our quality of life. ■



PUBLIC LANDS—THE SCIENCE PERSPECTIVE

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Many people consider the state and federal investment in public land ownership in the United States to be our greatest conservation legacy. The saying, "They're not making land anymore." is often invoked by advocates for further public land acquisition. Recent legislative efforts to dispose federal lands underscore the fact that many people are divided over whether these resources represent a legacy or a liability. This article summarizes some basic facts about the relevance of public lands to hunting, challenges in public lands management, and the Boone and Crockett Club's history in regard to this resource.

My generation of wildlife biologists was taught from day one that wildlife needed three things: food, cover, and water. Thus, the quantity and quality of habitat became a driving force in wildlife management. Aldo Leopold in his epic, "Game Surveys of the North Central States," funded by the Sporting Arms and Manufacturers Institute in the late 1920s, came to realize that private agricultural lands were key to game production in the upper Midwest, and thus Leopold advocated for rewarding or subsidizing farmers as part of the American Game Policy in 1930. Private land wildlife incentives, best exemplified in the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and the conservation provisions of the Farm Bill, are testaments to the vision of Leopold and the recognition that we will never be able to outright purchase enough land to meet public demands for sustainable wildlife resources. So what value do public lands provide?

The Boone and Crockett Club played a significant role in the establishment of federal lands for conservation. George Bird Grinnell is responsible for the establishment of Glacier National Park, like Charles Sheldon is responsible for Denali, and also Theodore Roosevelt for millions of acres of National Forests, National Wildlife Refuges, and other federal lands. The Club in many of its early books, including *American Big Game Hunting*, *Hunting and Conservation*, *American Big Game and its Haunts*, and *Hunting at High Altitudes* emphasized the importance of federal protected lands for conservation.

Public lands of all kinds in the United States – not just those for conservation – amount to around 40 percent of the total land area. Those lands open to hunting comprise a lesser amount. The National Survey of Hunting, Fishing, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, conducted every five years by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Census Bureau, has

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the most reliable national data on public versus private land hunting. One-third of United States hunters hunt on public land. When data on hunter residence are included, we can see that half of all urban hunters hunt on public lands.

Many studies on hunter attitudes, behavior, and motivations have identified access to hunting areas as a major concern, and a barrier to recruitment of new hunters. The availability of public lands both accessible to hunters and managed with the intent to provide hunting opportunities becomes increasingly important in light of this. State wildlife lands, particularly those purchased with Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration and/or hunter license dollars, are invaluable for providing hunting opportunity, and efforts to redirect these lands to purposes other than wildlife are prohibited under federal law, as enforced by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Many federal lands provide significant hunting opportunities. National Forests, National Wildlife Refuges, Bureau of Land Management lands, and others offer varying levels of hunter access and opportunity, while others, such as many National Parks, may be closed to hunting completely. The latter can still be of importance as source population areas—or potentially as liabilities due to a lack of population management. In many cases, competing demands for multiple uses inhibit land and population management that is desirable for providing the maximum hunting opportunities, experiences, and practices designed to ensure the sustainability of habitats that support wildlife for generations to come. These competing demands can range from energy production on sensitive wildlife lands to advocacy for "hands-off" land management. Can there be resolution that allows for a sharing of the wealth? Often, the interests of wildlife and other land uses are incompatible to the extent that it becomes an either-or proposition. Our courts often opt for the greatest good to the greatest number of people, but that defies principles of the Public Trust Doctrine in wildlife, that holds our government trustees to a higher standard and limits the decision space on trade-offs.

Jack Ward Thomas, no stranger to divisive land management controversies, has suggested we consider a new approach to federal land management that is revolutionary yet imbued with the common sense that Jack is brimming with. He suggested we take all Agriculture and Interior Department public lands and look at each for their best, most practical management utility, identifying those best for wildlife, timber, recreation and culture, grazing, energy, and so on; and reshuffle the deck, assigning them to the appropriate agencies for administration. Doing so with organic legislation that gives clear mandates would pre-empt the conflict and litigation over competing uses. Key to this would be the recognition that lands for wildlife will not be the left-overs, but rather the priority. This recognition would acknowledge the vision of Roosevelt and Grinnell in creating the Club; that America's greatness is rooted in the values people derive from having wild lands to test their limits, hone skills, and build character such as that embodied in Fair Chase hunting. Doing so on public lands can cultivate another great American virtue, one that Shane Mahoney defines as citizenship. ■