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GUIDE to a better SPORTSMAN'S CLUB



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GUIDE to a better SPORTSMAN'S CLUB

By WILLIAM L. REAVLEY

Introduction

SPORTSMEN, your hunting and fishing pleasure is being threatened! Everyday in Colorado another crime is being committed against the state's wildlife. The needs of increasing human populations are apparent everywhere. More humans need more water, crops, timber, minerals—in fact, all of the natural resources are now in demand as never before. Directly and indirectly this demand portends doom for your hunting and fishing, and most certainly for your children's, if not approached with intelligence and satisfied with sound planning.

There are two approaches to this serious problem. You can hang up the rod, sell your firearms and forget the whole thing. Or you can work with a group of fellow enthusiasts and enjoy the outdoor sports as you never have before. Well-directed effort will aid tremendously in providing hunting and fishing for you and your children. This effort starts and is maintained through local sportsman's clubs.

Local clubs can be a complete failure or they can do the work for which they were formed. It all depends upon the attitude of the club, the leadership and how it is run. It is the purpose of this publication to lend a hand to clubs that desire improvement. The ideas and suggestions found here are for the most part borrowed from a large list of reasons offered by established clubs for their continued success.

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Organization

SHOULD YOUR COMMUNITY fail to have a sportsman's organization, the task of forming one is not great. Do not be discouraged by the cry that your community already has too many organizations. Active and properly run, a sportsman's organization will fit into any community.

Small communities need not hesitate for lack of prospective members. Some of the most successful organizations are made up of individuals from several small communities that are close to each other. They usually hold each meeting in a different place on a pre-arranged schedule. Experience in Colorado indicates that the larger club, drawing from several communities, is usually head and shoulders above the small club with few members. Any club must be large enough to assure good leadership and activeness over a long period of years. Usually this means a hundred members or more.

Problem in Large Cities

In contrast, where large communities have a large potential membership, the formation of a club involves another problem. It is possible for purposes of good management to become too large if the club is not properly organized. Most large clubs are run by a board of directors who are elected by the entire club membership. Often the board elects the club officers. Very large clubs usually hold only one or two meetings a year for all the club members. The board of directors meets more often and conducts the business of the organization. For clubs with a membership of over a thousand this type of management has proved successful. However, some recognized experts insist that both the board and the entire membership should meet regularly (preferably monthly), with board meetings held separately.

Every new club must ponder over its proposed constitution and by-laws. Write them to fit your specific needs. It isn't

necessary to become highly technical. Keep them flexible enough so your club will not be hampered in its activities. An excellent form for guidance in the matter of constitution is contained in the pamphlet "*How to Form a Sportsman's Club*," printed by *Outdoor Life Magazine*, 353 Fourth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y. Copies may be obtained from the Game and Fish Department, 1530 Sherman Street, Denver.

The Department's education division is always willing to lend a helping hand to sportsman's clubs whenever it can. The division's five educators, each assigned to a specific area of the state, will be especially pleased to cooperate in the establishment of new clubs. Junior conservation organizations connected with adult clubs, local schools, or both, are of special interest to the Department. Due to the size of their assigned areas, the educators' time must be carefully apportioned, but they will make every effort to be of assistance.

Finances

How to finance the local club is always controversial. The usual method, of course, is through annual dues, varying in amount from one to five dollars and more. This question of money is of fundamental importance. In setting annual dues, the club must determine the expected costs of its routine operation, cost of proposed projects, possible remuneration of officers—in short, every foreseeable contingency should be evaluated. Only after such an investigation can the proper assessment (based also on number of members and their ability and desire to pay) be accurately set.

One word of caution: special assessments are universally unpopular; and a chronic condition of indebtedness will quickly wreck a club. Dues must be set wisely, collected consistently (and in advance), and never, if possible, changed. Pursuing a steady course in financing

procedures will prevent the money problem from becoming a constant point of dissension.

Every club should become incorporated. Secure the services of a lawyer, and with a minimum of fuss and expense this task can be quickly completed. This procedure will serve to protect club officers and will give the organization a legal identity in the eyes of the state.

Adopt Community Project

One of the surest ways of getting a club going is to first adopt some community project that cannot be accomplished without the formation and sponsorship of a local sportsman's club. Possible projects are listed elsewhere in this publication. From them might be selected the likely one to stir your community. Department

personnel in your community might also be called upon to suggest likely projects. Consult clubs near you that are already established.

Talk the thing over with the sportsmen in your community. When some interest has been shown and the idea well established, grab the bull by the horns. Engage a place for a meeting and set the date. Give the information to the newspapers and get the word spread. Have in mind likely officer material and get the meeting under way. Even if everybody doesn't show up, it's a start. Remember that worthwhile things take time to build. Run the club right and it will grow. You will enjoy your hunting and fishing more thereafter because you will be playing a part in making it better.

Meetings

ATTENDANCE is one of the chief headaches for many conscientious club officers. A handful of regular customers, with few new faces, coming time after time indicates that little real interest is being created. Actually it is no mystery that the average club member is reluctant to attend a meeting in a smoke-filled room where poorly organized programs are characterized by slow and tedious bickering over minor points. Competition from other kinds of clubs, sporting events, movies, TV, or the easy chair at home is always very keen.

Attendance alone doesn't amount to much. Clubs that serve only the purpose of giving a small minority group a voice naturally are attended mostly by sheep-like members who work hard at playing follow the leader. Too often the qualifications of this leader consist of his ability to talk longest and loudest. It's no wonder that active community leaders and the up-and-coming young fellows are not found in the "audience" of such a club. Without a diversified representative cross

section of active members who attend the meetings the average club will be a long time in achieving anything worthwhile. Physical presence helps fill up the room, but one good man with ideas and energy is worth ten who only sit and vote.

Planning Essential

With a little planning, execution and imagination it's possible to turn that uninteresting affair into a snappy and interesting meeting. Regarding the mechanics of the meeting, there are many things that should be taken into consideration. General consensus has it that better attendance comes from meetings that are held on regular meeting nights with definite dates. There will always be conflicts with other meetings in town, but pick out the time that conflicts least with other meetings. And don't keep the meetings a secret. Give your local papers the information. Notification cards before each meeting have helped some clubs. Appropriate door prizes will attract some customers.

With the time and place designated, get into it! Start the meeting on time. A prompt and businesslike start will carry a long way into the meeting. A late beginning usually means a haphazard proposition for the rest of the evening.

Meetings that are left to run themselves are never successful. Every point on the agenda should be worked out beforehand. Committee reports, financial statements, old business and new business and every anticipated discussion should come along in its proper place with assembly line efficiency. It only requires a small bit of planning to avoid the indecision, delays, false starts and stops and general ineffectiveness. If club officers are too busy for complete pre-meeting planning it might be expedient to appoint a member to lend a helping hand.

Get a Gavel

In addition to being prepared as well as possible, further assurance of a smooth session rests in the liberal use of a good stout gavel. Coupled with the observance of Roberts Rules of Order, chances are that the customers will not fall asleep or wither on the vine from boredom. A special effort should be made to stick to the subject at hand and render a decision on it before going on to the next subject.

Then, from the mechanical standpoint everything is in order with: (1) regular assigned meeting nights with previous notification; (2) prompt beginning; (3) ample pre-meeting planning; and (4) use of gavel and Roberts Rules of Order.

Yes, there's more than this to a successful meeting! Besides the mechanical end of it, there's the higher plane or philosophy of the meeting. When controversial problems arise it is well to keep in mind that your club should represent the general opinion of the well-informed public in your community. If the ideas and concepts of the group are not popular with intelligent public opinion the club is on the wrong track. Habitual condemning, fault-finding and criticism without proper knowledge, or the disregarding of factual information, can ruin any club regardless of its intent. It is well to remember during the conduct of any meeting that courtesy, understanding and adherence to

fact rather than emotional desires will result in achievement. Let everybody have his say, but base decisions upon fact rather than upon the arguments of those who talk the loudest and longest. There is no other method of obtaining a membership of truly interested community leaders. Without this kind of support the sportsman's club will only be a name.

Keep Meetings Short

Having finished the meeting proper, it's the usual custom to promptly adjourn. The business meeting will not be too long if it's planned properly. The entertainment or social part of the program comes next. This portion certainly has its points as it tends to bring the members together and allows better acquaintances between individuals. However, clubs that mix entertainment with more serious business often end up with a poor job on both counts. A big annual affair with entertainment as the main theme is a fine proposition. Don't, however, invite along with the entertainment a distinguished guest or official and sandwich in his part of the program between a couple of the acts. The audience won't be in the mood for serious speech-making and the guest speaker will go away feeling his efforts are largely wasted. So if it's to be entertainment strictly, keep it that way for best results.

A great many things can be done with the after-meeting entertainment session. Movies are all right but tend to become obsessions with many clubs. Originality and planning will produce entertainment of the educational type which can be a real attraction. Notify the members beforehand just what will be going on. A variety of programs will bring out different interests and more members. Both are bound to help the organization. Appoint an entertainment committee and see that they do right by your club.

Ways to Boost Attendance

The following suggestions have been used and are proving themselves to be successful in bringing out membership attendance. Perhaps they will not completely fit all clubs concerned, but they are something to think about, and perhaps



F. L. WAUGH

Attendance is one of the club's chief headaches. You can help matters by opening meetings on time, on a regular schedule. And keep them short!

will furnish further ideas for your organization.

1. Pick out a local expert and have him put on a fly-tying demonstration. This might be expanded to club sponsorship of fly-tying classes.

2. An ammunition reloading demonstration would acquaint members with a vital part of their equipment. A member able to include some simple ballistics in his talk would make the program doubly interesting.

3. An annual display and demonstration of new sporting goods equipment by local dealers, showing the new models and clever new gadgets, should be popular.

4. Fly casting, bait casting and spinning demonstrations by local experts at appropriate times of the year might be

developed into an interesting annual contest.

5. Obtain the services of someone with well-trained hunting and retrieving dogs to demonstrate and create an interest in the use of dogs for hunting.

6. A talk on waterfowl decoys, with samples of the various types, along with how to call ducks, would be a most appropriate program.

7. Archery makes a good demonstration, emphasizing the accuracy and power of the archer's tools for hunting purposes.

8. Put on a hunting and fishing quiz (ask the Department about this) wherein the winner receives a suitable prize.

9. Don't overlook local photography experts who have interesting movies and slides of local scenes.

Projects

THIS IS THE MOST important part of any club's program. An active organization never fails to have at least one major project under way at all times, with a few minor ones also on the docket. Special committees can be appointed for specific projects. Even a projects committee that receives suggestions from club members for possible projects has merit. The universal practice of suggestion boxes used in private industry and government, with appropriate remuneration for useful suggestions, might be modified for use by sportsman's organizations.

Club projects mean the difference between success and just another sportsman's outfit. Routine club jobs such as writing letters of recommendation or protest, or asking the Game and Fish Department for something, are not considered projects. The true project is a product of the club's initiative, wherein it actually works and performs by itself an achievement useful to itself and to the community.

Worthwhile Projects Essential

Projects are valuable in many ways. For one, everybody in the club can be given a job and a chance to feel useful. This is one of the secrets of successful organizations. Keep the members busy and interest will not lag. This secondary benefit in the long run often means more to the club than does the project itself.

Projectless clubs usually have a difficult time obtaining new members. Organizations that accomplish things can point with pride to a long list of benefits when seeking new members. Certain projects will interest whole new segments of a community and will enlist support unobtainable in any other way.

The importance of a good project program cannot be over-emphasized. The following suggestions for projects have been borrowed from clubs who have used the projects with usually gratifying results. The list is merely a beginning and doesn't even scratch the surface of possi-

bilities. Not all of them are suited to all communities. However, they should offer enough suggestions to keep any club going for a long time.

Try These Suggestions

1. *Sponsor a junior club.* Work with the school authorities and establish an organization in the junior high school. After two years it can carry over into the high school. Interest a member of the school faculty and work with him in developing the young into good sportsmen and better citizens. (Detailed information available from the Game and Fish Department.)

2. *Encourage the teaching of conservation in your community.* This can be done by paying the bill for a teacher from your schools to attend one of the many excellent conservation summer courses offered in Colorado educational institutions. At least one conservation-minded and trained teacher in each county will form a network for sound conservation teaching.

3. *Subsidize a research program.* Pick out a perplexing problem of wildlife or fish management in your community and give financial support to a wildlife student from one of the educational institutions to help find the answer. Help him out in the field and learn what this research business is all about.

4. *Sponsor a conservation week.* Arrange for speakers, movies and slides for a planned week of conservation in your community. Make arrangements to get into the schools for an hour or two each day for the week. Cover as many adult meetings as possible during this period. Offer a prize for the best essay among school children on the subject covered each year.

5. *Farmer-sportsman relationships.* Here's a fertile field that can be approached from many angles: (a) Hold joint meetings, preferably near the landowners. Talk over your problems together and also entertain them. (b) Have available for use of landowners, free or at

cost, signs suitable for posting that read "hunting with permission only." (c) Form a committee to devise means of policing against property damage by irresponsible hunters and fishermen. (d) Offer a reward leading to the arrest of anyone damaging private property. (e) Offer your services to aid landowners who are receiving damage from wildlife.

6. *Conduct a firearms safety program.* Help the local rifle club or, if necessary, construct range facilities and help hunters sight in their rifles before the big game season.

7. *Build a safe and productive fishing area near town for the exclusive rights of children only.*

8. *Improve relations with non-resident hunters.* This can be done by: (a) sponsoring a "hunters night," just previous to the opening date of the hunting season, offering entertainment and short talks designed to create good will and understanding; (b) publishing a booklet to be distributed to non-residents pointing out rules of conduct, etc.

9. *Set aside funds for an annual library contribution.* Buy appropriate out-

door books and donate to public and high school library.

10. *Sell Department magazine, "Colorado Conservation."* Divide up into teams and create competition, with appropriate prizes. Or offer prizes to school children selling the most subscriptions.

11. *Help on Game and Fish Department projects.* Many clubs are already contributing by planting fish in remote areas, by doing fish salvage work, and by furnishing voluntary manpower for special duties such as helping with big game winter problems.

12. *Conduct pest campaigns.* Often an annual affair in some localities, these programs are especially valuable for purposes of public relations within the community. Magpies and jack rabbits are popular targets for such campaigns.

13. *Devise and execute on-the-ground projects.* These vary according to locality. In areas of cultivation and row crops much can be done on the land to improve conditions for wildlife by: (a) fencing small areas and planting with suitable cover and food plants; (b) establishment of shelter belts for wildlife and agricul-

The club won't last if the membership is not constructively occupied. The list of projects above might give you some ideas for your own organization.

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ture benefits; (c) building and maintenance of farm ponds for fish and wildlife; (4) creation of brush piles for cottontails—use Christmas trees after the holiday season; (e) buying strips of cover such as sweet clover or alfalfa, etc., or even grain from farmer to leave standing on edge of field for wildlife.

In mountainous areas clubs can: (a) develop fishing ponds for trout; (b) develop stream improvement devices; (c) develop winter range plots to illustrate proper big game feed and problems connected with range restoration; (d) remove undesirable fish from local waters by use of traps or weirs; (e) plant and develop forests on burned areas and on cut-over areas.

The suggestions in this category are almost limitless. In every area there are

many excellent projects that sportsman's clubs can do to improve conditions for wildlife. This type of project is one of the best. It has no limits for getting the fellows working.

14. *Create picnic and recreation grounds.* Communities lacking these facilities will react favorably to clubs who will build suitable areas for all to enjoy.

15. *Print and distribute educational signs.* Here's a project that advertises your club and at the same time conveys a message. Properly-designed outdoor signs placed at strategic points leading to popular hunting and fishing areas can have themes like obey the game laws, respect the rights of the landowner, take only your share, leave a clean camp, and so on. Don't forget to put the name of your organization on the signs.

Officers

THERE'S NOT MUCH DOUBT that leadership makes the organization. Unfortunately, there are times when a whole club fails to recognize leadership. Chronic speechmakers are not necessarily leaders. Neither is the fellow who has a pet theory or two that he discusses and pushes at all times. Self-appointed experts on certain phases of wildlife management are good for any club, but they can quickly ruin a club if allowed to become officers. The ability to talk up and display belligerence may appeal to many club members, but such action does not come under the heading of leadership. Another attribute frequently confused with leadership is the pleasing personality. Popularity is a requisite of leadership, but it is not sufficient unto itself.

The President

This officer should be picked with great care. Certainly the election should be preceded by forethought. Good presidential material isn't easy to come by. But there is no reason why the best pos-

sible should not be selected each year.

The president should above all have an open mind and a conscientious desire for fairness and achievement. He shouldn't be burning with one special idea or interest, unless it's for a better, more active club. His speaking voice should be loud, distinct and friendly. If such can be found, the president should have the ability to get along with people and at the same time be firm and forceful when necessary. He should be especially club conscious.

After election it's important that the president remember that he has a membership to do the work. His function is planning and leading; and he can best serve the club by assigning work and allocating duties. Many clubs have been set back for years because well-meaning presidents have tried to do all the work themselves.

Incidentally, the office of president needs a couple of possessions. They are the good husky gavel and the copy of "Roberts Rules of Order" referred to

earlier. Neither, of course, are of any use unless they are liberally applied.

Vice-President

This officer can be much more than just a substitute for the president. Here's a chance to try out the leadership ability of the next prospective president. Give this officer some duties to test him out. Some suggestions include program chairman, official delegate to other meetings, new project expeditor or junior club expert. Don't be fearful of the young fellows. They have lots of ambition and energy. Proper guidance and experience can build the kind of leadership that is

needed. The office of vice-president is a good place to try them out.

Secretary-Treasurer

Whether or not this office calls for two men in your club, each job calls for plenty of work and no glory. In many larger clubs the practice of financially reimbursing these officers with an amount that denotes at least appreciation has paid off. Don't burden down some good-natured fellow with these jobs year after year. The more club members you have who have been officers, the more eager to serve will be the whole group.

Affiliations

INDIVIDUAL CLUBS IN COLORADO have the good fortune of being able to affiliate with either the Izaak Walton League or with the Colorado Wildlife Federation. Both of these organizations are established on a state-wide basis, and both are affiliated with reputable national organizations.

There are a number of reasons why such affiliation is a benefit to any local sportsman's club. Game and fish problems themselves are state-wide in nature. The regulations and methods of management of the wildlife must be considered on the basis of the entire state. Local clubs able to realize this situation can do themselves and the state much more good than the locals who are interested only in their own backyards and who have no knowledge of state-wide conditions.

Any single club or organization seldom has the influence or power to effectively work with the legislature to enact new or amend old laws. Affiliated clubs with sound ideas can get them recognized by their state-wide organizations; and such backing often does the job in the legislature. The single club not only lacks the means to tackle legislative matters, but has no way of knowing the true picture of any situation throughout the state. And

proper liaison with the legislature, the Game and Fish Department and with many organizations interested in land and wildlife is one of the most important tasks a successful club must face.

The exchange of ideas from regional and state meetings, through periodical bulletins, committee reports and special releases, can make a great deal of difference to an individual club. It means taking off the blinders and learning what is going on with the state's wildlife. Clubs can learn what other organizations are doing about problems similar to their own.

The national connections of either of these groups also is of importance. This is particularly true for Colorado. Without such connections club members by and large have no knowledge whatsoever regarding legislation and management of the federal lands. Since much of the fish and game in the state depend upon the proper management of federal lands, it is well for clubs to be aware of what goes on in this regard. Important decisions affecting your hunting and fishing are made in Washington, D. C., and you should know about them.

Incidentally, the fellows who run the state-wide and national wildlife organiza-



GEORGE ANDREWS

The whole community will benefit from a junior conservation group; and the youngsters can be depended upon to support your group in their adult years.

tions are nothing but local club officers who are also working for local clubs in their own home towns. Any group larger than a single club is merely a service organization designed to make the local club's efforts more effective. State and national officers are working for local clubs and are indeed governed by many small community organizations. State and national organizations that have tried to dictate and run local organizations have never been successful.

Affiliation then, with either the Colorado Wildlife Federation or the Izaak Walton League, means a local club in-

formed on state and national wildlife matters. It allows the locals to draw on the fund of club management know-how that has been proved successful throughout the state and the nation. Your club officers will return from state and national meetings with new ideas and fresh enthusiasm. Through affiliation, community organizations will not only retain their local interest and value, but will greatly increase their ability to solve their own problems; and they will be better prepared to participate in important state-wide and national solutions to modern wildlife problems.

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Conservation Pledge

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and faithfully to defend from
waste the natural resources of
my country - its soil and
minerals, its forests, waters,
and wildlife.

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