

Session Five.

Predators and Prey: Integrating Predator and Prey Management to Achieve Conservation Objectives

Opening Remarks

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Welcome. For those who do not know me I am Bob Byrne, the former Conservation Program Manager for the Safari Club International Foundation. I am now a Project Manager for D J Case and Associates, a Conservation Communications Consulting firm in Indiana.

I appreciate you all taking time out of your busy schedules to attend this workshop. This is a timely topic, and an exciting time for the issues we are covering.

Before we get started, I'd like to talk briefly about the history of this workshop and SCIF's role in its development.

SCIF is a relatively new 501(c)(3) conservation, education and humanitarian services organization affiliated with the better known Safari Club International. SCI is an international hunting organization and its members are avid eco-tourists who are motivated by hunting to embark on world-wide adventures. Throughout its history, SCI members have contributed to conservation projects in both the US and in far-off lands. The formation of SCIF was a logical step so that SCI members could focus their conservation efforts in a more effective manner.

However, since SCIF *formally* entered the "conservation game" rather late, it was far easier to develop a conservation program that is "brandable" in foreign countries than it is in the US. Quite simply, the US is

blessed with a plethora of species- and equipment-driven sportsmen/conservation organizations that cover the conservation waterfront quite well, and there was little left of SCIF to “own.”

After some internal reviews it was determined that one area that was not fully covered is the interaction between large predators and their prey, particularly large ungulates. This focus fits very well with our member’s interest in having well managed populations of both. As a result, we have been strategically investing in research on this issue for several years and will likely to continue investing in this research for some time. The results of some of that research will be presented here today.

Saying that we have “well managed populations of both predators and their prey” is much easier than doing it! As we all know managing a single species of wildlife in today’s economic, social and political (ESP) climate is far from easy. Doing so, with multiple species, each species with a complex array of ESP issues, which in turn are often matched with conflicting human values and diverse stakeholders, is *nearly* impossible.

The operative word in that sentence is “nearly,” because the agencies involved are doing a remarkable job in spite of the difficulties.

You will note that while the planning committee strove to obtain a diverse mix of speakers; the agenda is weighed toward agency personnel. That was a conscious decision, because they have the vested legal authority to make decisions. *How* they make the decisions is a participatory process that anyone can join. However, ultimately, the agencies (even if aided by court rulings) will have to make the decisions.

Decision making is difficult at best. In spite of its difficulties, generally, you can expect better outcomes if you make *informed* decisions. And that is why we are here, to share information so that our collective wisdom can be applied to the decision making process.

However we should not stop here. We hope that this meeting will help set the stage for future discussions on *achieving conservation objectives*. As we all know, decision making without knowing your outcomes and how to measure those outcomes can be fraught with danger. Again, that is why we are here, so that we can begin to crystallize achieving these conservation objectives in an integrated manner.

SCIF is certainly committed to that process, which is why we elected to host this meeting in conjunction with the Wildlife Management Institute.

In closing, I also want to thank our presenters and moderators for assisting SCIF and WMI in putting this program together. They have a lot of information to share. In fact if you look at the agenda we could be accused of having too much information to share.

Again, thank you all for attending. I am confident that it will be worth your time and effort to be here.