

Nov. 28, 1932

Dr. Paul L. Errington
Iowa State College
Ames, Iowa

Dear Paul:

Thanks for the additional suggestions for revision of the Iowa Report. Yes, I go over each chapter again before sending it to Outdoor America, and I shall carefully re-examine the passages you mention.

I have been thinking continually about your letter to Dr. Boone. Please remember that I said in my first letter that I distrusted words as a means of unravelling this question because of their variable meaning. How we use the labels "research" and "demonstration" doesn't matter; what we actually do and say in the initial year of the Iowa Experiment matters a great deal. I cannot offer an opinion on the basis of words--either yours or the Commission's.

Possibly we should all remind ourselves at this time that nobody has ever yet answered the question of how to start game research, for and in a state, in such a way as to:

- (1) Shed immediate light on the most important conservation problems, so that administrative agencies will be guided accordingly.
- (2) Convince the public that light is actually being emitted, so that it wants more light.
- (3) Conform to the economic and legislative vehicles available for translating light into human action.
- (4) Retain scientific soundness.

The Biological Survey has certainly not done it, except to a degree in the single instance of Stoddard's work, but he was not accountable to a state, had only one species to shed light on, and the authority to act on his findings pre-existed in his cooperators, i.e., he did not have to convince landowners who were free to reject his advice.

The Game Survey likewise presents only a partial analogy, mainly for two reasons: (a) the states to whom advice was offered did not have to pay for it, (b) the "research" lasted such a short time as to offer no test of the state's capacity for patience. In the work I am now doing for Wisconsin at its own expense (a) is cancelled out, but (b) remains.

The fellowships are not a sound analogy because they, too, cost the state nothing or practically nothing.

The research work done in Michigan and California comes as close to the Iowa situation as anything yet attempted; but in California there has been no real research outside the field of fisheries, and in Michigan the real research has been conducted by a school where the teaching function introduces a variable not present in the Iowa set-up. Moreover the Michigan game research is much too new for anyone to judge whether it will be acted upon.

The only real precedent for the present Iowa game set-up is in the field of agriculture, where the agricultural colleges have certainly, in instance after instance, met each of the four requirements. There was, however, this difference: they were dealing with an activity almost purely economic in its nature. The esthetic criteria which will always be present in American wild life conservation were absent or supposed to be absent from the agricultural field. I find myself in doubt whether even the eminently successful agricultural colleges could have handled a subject involving as much ethics and esthetics as game and wild life. We must also remember that their present set-up is that of a large and recognized activity which has long ago been admitted to be a success. What we should study is not their present set-up so much as their early methods when they were first getting started. I think you will find that they had to subordinate fundamental research for a good many years.

The Forest Products Laboratory presents another partial analogy, except that it served an industry, not a state, and the money came indirectly through the federal treasury, rather than from the industry. I know to my certain knowledge that they had to subordinate fundamental research for a good many years. They simply managed not to forget it entirely and to come forward with it, strongly, at the opportune moment.

I am mentioning all these cases merely to emphasize that we are really pioneering in Iowa to a much greater degree than we ourselves realize. Nobody need be surprised if either you or the Commission or the public fails to fall into perfect gear with the others in the course of the first six months. Differences of opinion as to how to go about it are, in fact, inevitable at this stage of the game. We should not worry at all about disagreements of ways and means if we are of one mind on objectives.

If I have any counsel at all to offer you now, it is this: Make sure that you let the Commission and the public understand that you are at one with them on objectives. Their objective is simply: "More game." Yours is qualified in that you want to get more game by sound rather than unsound methods. These criteria of soundness do not yet exist in the public mind,

and only partially in the Commission's mind. You can afford to lecture them occasionally on your criteria of soundness provided you have previously made it clear that you are as enthusiastic as they are about more game. In short, do not let your mental reservations as to ways and means obscure the fact that you are of one mind with your public as to the main end in view.

I do not know whether these remarks are clearing or befuddling the issue. Should they strike you as to the point, you might show this letter to Mr. Darling, Dr. Boone, and Bode. If they are not to the point, throw the letter in the waste basket, since after all it is only words. The main thing I can convey is my appreciation of the difficulties as well as the stupendous national importance of your position.

Yours as ever,

Aldo Leopold ^H

Dictated but not read.