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Adirondack Sportsman

By BILL RODEN

The annual meeting of the New York State Conservation Council, held in Ithaca last week, was dramatic in more ways than one. We'll be referring to it off and on for some time. To cover all that took place in one column would be impossible.

It was a meeting of change from beginning to end. While President Arthur Wager of Hyde Park was re-elected, there was almost a total change-over in other officerships. John Szijarto of Lowville, president of the Adirondack Conservation Council, was elected vice president. Among Adirondackers elected directors were Ed Morette of Essex County, Bob Boyce of St. Lawrence County, George Peterson of Washington County, and John Bunzey of Saratoga County. James Mullarkey, immediate past president, was elected chairman of the Board of Directors replacing Ed Morette of Ticonderoga. Many of the new officers and directors are younger people more in tune to the problems of today and less concerned with the accomplishments of the past. All things taken into consideration, we expect a considerably more dynamic and aggressive council with these new faces.

We're sorry to see long-time friend and colleague Ed Morette step down from the position of Chairman of the Board of Directors but we're glad he remains a member of the board. Morette has been an active leader in the Council for over 30 years and the roster of accomplishments that he's been responsible for or contributed to is far too long to ever be completely listed.

Strong Negotiator

Most recently he was a leader in the negotiation of the upcoming expanded programs for the Fish and Wildlife Division as a result of the increased license fee. In his annual report to the Council, Morette revealed that the Federal Government has appropriated \$100,000 for a feasibility study for the Federal salmonid hatchery to be located in New York State to serve the Champlain Valley. This is a facility that the people of Vermont and New York have worked for for years — the re-establishment of salmon and lake trout in Lake Champlain. With the responsibilities of chairman of the board behind him, we're looking for Morette to turn his unique energy and abilities to moving this hatchery program forward to successful completion. The council's loss will be the Lake Champlain-Adirondack area's gain.

Certainly the most dramatic presentation at the convention was that of Commissioner Ogden Reid. In a fact-filled, fast-moving talk, Reid developed the highlights of the expanded programs of the Fish and Wildlife Division. Pointing out that few states are moving ahead with expanded support from sportsmen as New York State is, Reid developed a review of greatly expanded habitat improvement work in both the fish and wildlife segments. Coupled with this will be new programs of species management including trap-and-transfer of both turkeys and deer to peripheral Adirondack areas, complete reactivation of the long dormant ringneck pheasant raising-and-stocking program in New York State and attempts to re-establish the fisher in the Catskills. Both the Richard Reynolds Game Farm at Ithaca and the John White Game Farm at Basom will be refurbished and put back into the production of increased numbers of pheasants. Fishing access and parking areas and the acquisition of public fishing rights are high on the list of priorities. In addition, cooperative hunting areas within 30 minutes drive of the state's major population centers of Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse and New York are planned.

Points Outlined

Commissioner Reid emphasized these elements of the fish and wildlife expansion program:

- Initiation of a pilot program utilizing aquatic plants and marsh grasses in the Hudson River between Glens Falls and Troy to rid the river of PCB's.

- Liming 23 Adirondack ponds totaling 725 acres to reduce acidity to levels hospitable for fish.

Reid outlined the high priority sampling that has taken place in recent weeks of state waters and listed the waters where fish had been taken that exhibit excessive levels of PCB's. In addition to the Hudson River and Lake Ontario already announced by the department, high levels were found in the Mohawk, Seneca, Oswego Canal, Niagara River, Salmon River, Genesee River, Onondaga Lake, the Walloomsac Canal, St. Lawrence River and, most shocking of all, Lake George with 15 ppm in lake trout. The EPA standards call for a maximum of 5 ppm. Surprisingly, Lake Erie apparently doesn't have the chemical pollution of other waters.

The Ogden Reid who appeared before the Council this annual meeting has come a long way since his first appearance before this same group at the legislative session last winter. Reid certainly qualifies as one of the nation's leading environmentalists. His actions in connection with the Adirondack "acid rain" situation and the PCB pollution have been dynamic, forceful, positive and in the best traditions of government informing the people of the facts rather than seeking to suppress them or hide them. The commissioner is less familiar with fish and wildlife management and readily admitted it last winter, but in his presentation at this convention he demonstrated that he's learned a lot in those intervening months. This columnist is betting that Reid will make a mark of lasting significance in the environmental field. The sportsmen of New York State are backing him with dollars and support. If Reid will let his fish and wildlife team move ahead on the programs outlined in the next year or two, he will have the gratitude and loyalty and support of the largest conservation organization in New York State, not only for fish and wildlife but in support of other state environmental issues. In all the murky, unpleasant economic and bureaucratic confusion that seems to surround state and city governments, the developing program of fish and wildlife activities stands as a positive and unique pool of light, an example of what the combined efforts of people and government and adequate funding can do when trust is part of the agreement.