

ANALYSIS

WESTERN-WINCHESTER GAME RESTORATION PLAN

NOTE: While the enclosed booklet, "Upland Game Restoration", gives all essential details of the Western-Winchester Plan, descriptive and analytical matter suitable for editorial comment naturally has been held at a minimum. The following analysis is intended to develop salient points of general public interest.

BASIS OF THE PLAN:

The Western-Winchester Game Restoration Plan is based on the theory that Nature needs the assistance of the American farmer in maintaining an adequate supply of upland game. This assistance must be rendered in the restoration of natural cover, the control of predators, the planting and care of food patches, and, in some cases, the rearing of game birds and animals to supplement wild breeding stock on the land.

This theory in itself is not new to the Western-Winchester Plan, as a number of other game restoration plans have been evolved on the basis of farmer-sportsman co-operation. Where the Western-Winchester Plan differs is in the manner of compensating the farmer for labor, land and material devoted to game restoration.

A DIFFERENT FORM OF COMPENSATION:

Most other plans have provided for compensation to the farmer on the basis of a game harvest--either through the sale of hunting permits for stipulated periods of time, or at so much per bird taken from his property. It has developed that when Nature fails to do her part--through a severe winter kill or a summer's drouth--there is no game to harvest, and the farmer loses the anticipated revenue from the harvesting of his auxiliary crop. He has experienced a "game crop" failure. He receives little or no return for his labor, or for land permitted to revert to cover. There is no inducement for him to continue in the business of farming for game, and as a result, a fine beginning may be wasted through dissatisfaction with a system that pays only promises instead of cash.

The Western-Winchester Plan is intended to compensate the farmer in the same terms as his own agricultural investment--so much per acre for agricultural land permitted to revert to cover, so much per acre for food patches, etc. If exclusive shooting privileges are involved, here again the price is a fixed sum per acre. The plan follows closely the system followed by the various federal agencies engaged in retiring unprofitable lands from cultivation, and makes possible a close co-operation with the Soils Conservation Service, the CCC and other official agencies

engaged in broad programs of conservation with which game restoration can be co-ordinated.

The Western-Winchester Plan frankly contemplates the outlay of money by sportsmen in maintaining satisfactory shooting areas--just as golfers maintain their own golf courses. It is intended that the sportsman, who receives the benefits of an adequate game supply, shall take the gamble of satisfactory results rather than the farmer, who puts in his labor and his acres whether Nature does her part or not.

Nothing in the Western-Winchester Plan is intended to supplant the American tradition of free shooting wherever an adequate supply of game exists. Widespread inquiries indicate that comparatively few farmers attempt to exact fees for shooting privileges on areas where no outlay of money, labor or acreage is involved. The fact remains, however, that millions of acres of American farm lands have been rendered unfit for habitation by upland game by destruction of natural cover. It is for the reclamation of these acres, from the standpoint of shooting sport, that someone must pay the bill. Certainly the farmer is not going to assume this burden, especially when returning land to game cover interferes with his normal agricultural practices. The sportsman who receives the benefits of game management should be willing to pay the cost of his own "shooting insurance".

ADVANTAGES OF THE PLAN:

The outstanding advantage of the Western-Winchester Plan is the insurance of success by the application of continuous effort. No attempt to bring back game upon any depleted area should be for a shorter period than three years--preferably five. It will require at least one year, possibly two, to obtain an adequate stand of natural cover on acreage denuded of plant life by "clean farming" or severe drouth.

Study of the model lease form made part of the text of the booklet indicates how the farmer receives some revenue each year for labor and material expended, and land permitted to revert to cover--but the various forms of compensation are in exact proportion to their usefulness in the general scheme. For example, no payment is advocated for acreage left out of cultivation and permitted to revert to natural cover until after expiration of the first twelve months of operation of a managed area. The amount of acreage permitted to revert in the first twelve months is then made the basis for future payments. The number and extent of food patches, on the other hand, may be adjusted annually. As the game population increases, so will the amount of winter feed required.

Finally, the Western-Winchester Plan is sufficiently flexibly to adapt itself to large undertakings--such as county-wide programs--and to scale down from these extensive co-operative movements to the improvement of a

single farm through the adoption of game management practices. The single-unit idea, expressed in the slogan, "Adopt a Farm!", is undoubtedly the most satisfactory application of the plan because there will be a definite fixing of responsibility for the measures necessary to insure success or failure.

COST TO THE SPORTSMAN:

It will be understood, after reading "Upland Game Restoration", why it is necessary for the sportsman to bear the cost of restoring game on his own shooting area.

Certain improvements of a semi-permanent character must be made which come within the classification of individual property rights. Neither federal nor state governments, through any agency, can make these improvements without the consent of the owner of the land, and, in most cases, without his active co-operation and assistance.

The same rule applies to the sportsman who desires to improve a shooting area. If an area, properly managed, can be made to produce a shooting surplus of bob-white quail each year, it is a safe assumption that the full harvest of game will be taken from the land, perhaps by several individuals. If one such individual takes 50 birds, his share of the expense of managing the area would be \$15.75 per year--this figure being based upon the average expense under average conditions of the field management areas maintained by Western-Winchester as laboratories for actual game restoration experiments.

Thus the cost to the individual sportsman under the Western-Winchester plan would be a mere trifle of the expense ordinarily necessary, under modern conditions, to obtain a season's bag of 50 bob-whites. The entire sum would be a clear saving in transportation costs alone if the improved area lies closer home than existing favorable territories capable of producing the same number of birds.

One of the most famous of the quail states--Oklahoma--has a season's bag limit of 50 bob-whites. This is an entirely satisfactory figure for most sportsmen, providing five full-limit hunting days per season. Further reducing the cost to the sportsman to a daily basis, he would be paying approximately \$3.00 a day for perfect quail shooting on each of five days in the field.

If, due to drouth or some other factor beyond his control, a sportsman experiences a "game crop" failure on his area, he is still in a position to restore good shooting the next season without the necessity of building up from the very beginning. Thus "shooting insurance", like any other insurance, is most practical over a long period of time.