# COMMISSIONERS' REPORT.

Pursuant to statutory direction, we take pleasure in submitting our first biennial report. The report involves a rather unusual situation. Although it covers the two fiscal years ending June 30, 1916, this commission did not come into actual control until August 1, 1915. Thus, the first thirteen months of the biennial period were under the individual administration of the several departments combined to create this commission, and officially we are only responsible for the last eleven months of the period mentioned. We, therefore, feel that we should necessarily be brief as to the administrations during the aforesaid months, and confine our remarks to a financial statement. Chairman Nevin of this commission having long been active as superintendent of fisheries under the old commissioners of fisheries, we are able to include complete information covering the old fisheries department.

By provisions of Chapter 406, Laws of 1915, this commission succeeded to all the powers and duties of the Forestry Board, State Park Board, Conservation Commission, Commissioners of Fisheries and the State Fish and Game Warden Department. The intent and effect was to consolidate under one head all the closely related duties and problems of administration over forest and stream, fish and game, and to give powerful impetus to the conservation of the natural resources of the Badger State.

So that the public may better understand the actual meaning and result of the consolidation we have prepared the following statement:

**Salaried positions and honorary appointments under old departments**

| | Salaried | Non-salaried |
|---|---|---|
| State Park Board | none | 3 |
| State Forestry Board | 2 | 5 |
| Commission of Fisheries | 2 | 7 |
| Fish and Game Warden | 2 | none |
| Conservation Commission | none | 7 |
| Office clerks and stenographers | 8 | none |
| Total | 14 | 22 |

**Salaried positions and appointments under new department**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Commissioners and secretary | 4 | none |
| Office clerks and stenographers | 5 | |
| Total | 9 | none |

It will be noted that the consolidation resulted in reducing the number of salaried officers, clerks and stenographers from 14 to 9, and incidentally 22 members of boards and commissions were dispensed with. The saving in salaries in the administration end of the work, however, is of minor

importance in the resultant economy. To this must be added the traveling expenses of the 22 commissioners. Under the old system each of the five departments issued its own annual or biennial report, a separate expense for the printing of stationery and office forms, and for postage, office supplies and equipment—five departments of state, all drawing from the public exchequer in practically a duplication of expenditures. The old forestry board, state fish and game warden and fish commission each occupied separate offices. The actual saving to the state cannot be placed at less than from ten to twelve thousand dollars.

Most important, however, is the increased efficiency in the services rendered the state. Politics has been absolutely abolished in our reorganization and a demand was made for strict attention to the work of our several divisions and particularly in the activities to conserve the wild life of the state. There is nothing so contaminating to efficient service of a department of this nature as political servitude. This commission is proud to say that our first instruction to every employee was that efficient service would be the measure of his tenure in office, and that his citizen's rights were matters of his individual preference. In making appointments to this department we adhere at all times to the State Civil Service laws. These policies have been strictly adhered to and will be as long as the present commissioners are at the head of this department.

Under the old régimé the state sustained five departments, all working entirely independently of one another, although the activities of all were so closely related that the work of one department overlapped or interwove with that of another. One department is now administering the affairs of five, and three men, who devote their entire time and attention, instead of twenty-six honorary commissioners, are responsible for the proper administration of the state's business along those particular lines.

Because of restrictions placed upon the activities of the old forestry board by the Supreme Court prior to the creation of this commission, the work on the forest reserves has been confined, chiefly, to that of protecting all state lands north of Town 33 from fire and trespass, the sale of dead, down, dying and mature timber, the maintenance of two forest nurseries, the sale of planting stock therefrom, surveying and leasing islands and lake lots, and other work incident to the proper care and protection of the property.

As the decision of the Supreme Court in no way affected the management of the state park properties, we have actively continued the improvement, care and operation of the several state parks as far as available funds would permit.

Joint resolution No. 32 passed by the 1915 legislature places with us the duty of presenting to the 1917 legislature a revision and codification of all fish and game laws. Pursuant to this action by the legislature, we immediately started investigations. After due notice was published, meetings were held with commercial fishermen at the following ports:

At Sheboygan on February.....14, 1916, 77 fishermen present.
At Green Bay on February.....15, 1916, 151 fishermen present.
At Sturgeon Bay on February....16, 1916, 103 fishermen present.
At Oconto on February.....17, 1916, 46 fishermen present.

At Marinette on February.....18, 1916, 50 fishermen present.
At Milwaukee on February.....23, 1916, 83 fishermen present.

These meetings were held for the purpose of gaining some knowledge directly from the licensed fishermen, on which to base our recommendations as to laws covering the commercial fishing industry on Lake Michigan and Green Bay. Five hundred and ten typical fishermen—men who have followed fishing in outlying waters for years—were present. If space would permit, we would like to print the minutes of the six meetings mentioned above, so that the reader might appreciate the varied and diversified ideas and opinions held by the fishermen. Not only do the fishermen of Sheboygan disagree with the fishermen of the other five ports (the same being true at all the meetings), but, also, the fishermen working out of the same port disagree among themselves. Hook fishermen say the pound-net and gill-net men are wrong, and vice versa. At the Sheboygan meeting arguments were made in favor of 2½, 2⅜, 2⅝, 2¾, 4, 4½ and 5 inch mesh for catching trout. The gist of the situation is that we, after a careful consideration of all the information secured, must present such a revision of the fish and game laws as we deem best and proper.

We take pleasure in commenting on the interest and vigor shown by the employees in the several divisions of this commission. It is refreshing to find an existing condition in that all our employees feel that they are all members of one big family, that their interests are all in common, and that they are working for a common cause—for the good of the department.

We wish to express the appreciation of this commission for the help and coöperation by the railroad companies in the distribution of fish planted in public waters. This assistance is invaluable in the final operations of our hatcheries. The rapid and expeditious transportation of the fish cans, the willing attitude of the railroads and their employees to assist whenever possible, are of great help in making our work a huge success.

We are also indebted to the Biology Department of the University of Wisconsin for assistance in problems that are of a more scientific nature. The University has always responded in a spirit most willing to assist us whenever possible.

The commissioners express to Mr. Arthur F. Belitz, assistant revisor of statutes, their thanks for the aid given in the revision and codification of the state fish and game laws.

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## BUDGET FOR BIENNIAL PERIOD ENDING JUNE 30, 1919.

**Requested Appropriation: (Annual)**

| | |
|---|---|
| For General Operation | $200,000.00 |
| For Repairs and Maintenance | 13,000.00 |
| For Property and Improvements | 13,000.00 |
| Total | $226,000.00 |

**General Operation. ($200,000.00)**

This expenditure includes all items of salaries, labor, supplies and traveling expenses. The amount is $30,112.54 below the total disbursements by the former Forestry Board, Park Board, Fish Commission and State Game Warden during the last year that these departments operated independently. The amount is practically the same as the amount expended for the purpose during our first year of operation. The amount is sufficient but we cannot properly administer the affairs of state under our direct supervision on a less amount. It is the same appropriation as given by the Legislature of 1915.

**Repairs and Maintenance. ($13,000.00)**

This expenditure includes the upkeep of all properties under our care, i. e., repairing of roads, all tools and equipment, painting and repairing of all buildings, and the upkeep of all hatchery ponds, raceways and pipe lines. Our inventory shows we have property and equipment representing an investment of $632,744.00. Being state property it is always expected to present the best possible appearance. Practically all of the ninety odd buildings need painting, many need a new roof, many miles of park roads need repairs, and the state boats, launches, engines and other equipment need overhauling.

For this purpose the Legislature of 1915 made an appropriation of but $5,000. It was the amount asked for the fish hatcheries alone and the approximate amount usually given that department. In the hurry during the last days of the session the amount was not changed and no provision was made for the parks, forestry and warden divisions. As a consequence some of our necessary upkeep work was left undone.

The amount asked for provides for the forestry, park, warden and fisheries divisions.

**Property and Improvements. ($13,000.00)**

This expenditure includes the erection of new buildings, building of new roads, new hatchery ponds, raceways or pipe lines, and the purchase of new tools or equipment. With 457,200 acres of land and property values amounting to over $630,000.00 under our control, it will be readily appreciated that the amount we ask for is not excessive.

The 1915 Legislature appropriated $4,000 for this purpose but the same is true as to the repairs and maintenance appropriation as explained above. It was only sufficient for the needs of the fisheries division.

**Conclusion.**

The total appropriation is some $26,000.00 less than the amount disbursed during the fiscal year ending June 30, 1915. It will also be noted that during the last fiscal year this department turned $227,261.40 into the treasury of the state of Wisconsin. We anticipate that the present year will see an increase of from ten to fifteen thousand dollars as last year the sale of hunting licenses was quite below the average, also the return on rough fishing was low. The commission is more than self-sustaining.

## RECOMMENDATIONS.

That all moneys collected by this department from the sale of licenses, confiscations, wardens' fees, proceeds from fishing contracts, concessions, leases (except Federal Grant Islands) or derived from any other source in the general administration of this department, be deposited with the state treasurer and be credited to what shall be known as the "State Conservation Fund." That an appropriation be made for the administration of our work in the usual manner. The surplus in the Conservation Fund over and above our appropriation or disbursements may be expended by this commission, with the consent of the State Emergency Board, for any special purpose such as additional equipment, new buildings, new hatcheries or hatchery ponds, property improvements or increasing the warden force at any particular period. Such money to be used for any of our work with the exception of road work or improvement work on state parks. The said Conservation Fund to be cumulative and nonlapsible.

### FISHERIES DIVISION.

To reënact subsection 4 of section 172–22, statutes of 1913, providing a fund for the rescue of fish from the land-locked sloughs and bayous adjacent to the Mississippi river. This fund was repealed, unintentionally, by section 22, chapter 607, laws of 1915. At the time the repeal went into effect, August 26, 1916, the fund contained $9,843.36. The fund should be re-established with an appropriation of $10,000.00.

To place a law in the statutes, prohibiting the pollution of our inland waters through the cheese, condensed milk and canning factories carrying the refuse from their operations into the lakes and streams. This department to coöperate with the State Board of Health in the carrying out of the provisions of such law.

### PROTECTION OF FISH AND GAME.

Pursuant to joint resolution number 32 by the legislature of 1915, we have prepared a complete revision and codification of the state fish and game laws and the same will be submitted to the legislature of 1917 in the form of a bill. We have spent a great deal of time in study and securing information on which to base this revision and we sincerely trust that the legislature of 1917 will bear in mind that our recommendations are the results of almost two years of study and research.

We herewith mention some of the most important changes we endorse:

1. A general open and close season over the entire state for all varieties of wild animals. Repeal the many special county laws.

2. A close season over the entire state on partridge, grouse and prairie chicken.
3. Change the open season on wild birds from September 7 to September 26 and extend the season to December 31.
4. Change form of hunting license to smaller size and omit the deer coupons. Deer coupons to be furnished at an extra fee of 50 cents. Reason—out of 160,000 licenses sold only about 35,000 are used for deer hunting. Thus 125,000 licenses are printed, each with three coupons, which are never used for deer hunting. This will reduce the printing cost 50 per cent to 60 per cent and be more convenient for hunters and county clerks.
5. Reduce the limit of daily catch of trout from 45 to 25.
6. Prohibit the sale of black bass and muskellunge.
7. Provide a trapper's license for taking fur bearing animals.
8. To increase the nonresident fishing license fee from $1.00 to $2.00. The nonresident hunting license for small game from $10.00 to $25.00 and for small game including deer $50.00. That we issue a resident trout fishing license at a fee of $1.00.
9. Reduce the nonresident hunters' bag limit to the same as a resident hunter.
10. Change game farm license law to omit muskrat.
11. Change opening day for taking black bass from May 29 to July 1.
12. Place a daily bag limit on all varieties of game fish.
13. Change the sunrise and sunset law by allowing shooting 20 minutes before sunrise or after sunset.
14. A law as to the establishing of wild life refuges.
15. A law providing for the forfeiture of any license for the season for which it is issued, if the holder is found guilty of a violation.
16. Increase all penalties. Principally—$300 for the use of dynamite in killing fish, $100 for having venison in possession out of season, $200 for shipping game to market, $300 for serving venison in railroad or lumber camps, hotels or summer resorts.
17. An absolute close season for all fishing in Green Bay and Lake Michigan from October 20 to November 31 inclusive.
18. No pound nets to be used in Green Bay during the month of April.
19. Repeal all laws as to outlying waters and stipulate a minimum gill net of 2¾ inches stretch measure. Regulate the taking of fish according to size stipulating in the law the minimum size of each variety of fish that may be had in possession. Have a law that any gill net less than 2¾ inch stretch measure found set in the waters, or found on the boats or reels of fishermen operating in Green Bay or Lake Michigan may be seized by the state conservation wardens. (The law of the state of Michigan allows no gill nets to be used in outlying waters with meshes less than 2¾ inch stretch measure.)
20. Change deer law that bucks must have horns at least 6 inches in length.
21. To prohibit the carrying of a gun or rifle in any automobile, or other vehicle unless the same is unloaded, and knocked down or enclosed in a carrying case.

22. Change the clamming law to permit the use of a dredge with an opening not more than three feet wide or with prongs more than four inches in length. No clams to be retained that measure less than one and one-half inches in greatest dimension.

This is a matter of far greater importance than most people realize. In Wisconsin almost a million dollars is invested in the pearl button industry and thousands of people are employed. It has been known for some time that the clam shell beds were nearing depletion and that some law must be enacted to conserve the supply. In the fall of 1915 the former Commissioners of Fisheries called a conference at Madison. Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois and the U. S. Bureau of Fisheries sent representatives. Pearl button manufacturers from all over the United States and one shell buyer for an European manufacturer were present. The investigations were most exhaustive and a bill was prepared for passage in the 1915 legislature. Senator Robert Glenn, living on the banks of the Mississippi, introduced the bill known as bill No. ..... S, which passed the senate but when it reached the assembly it was so amended as to be of no importance. Minnesota and Illinois passed the identical bill as introduced and which was drawn up by the conference. Here is one result of Wisconsin's failure to pass the measure. Minnesota passed the bill, the waters of the Mississippi river between the two states are now considered as interstate waters under the reciprocal law between the two states. Minnesota sells her clammers a license to use a dredge, Wisconsin does not—Minnesota clammers are taking hundreds of tons of shells and our own people must sit by and see thousands of dollars slip through their fingers. The price of pearl button shells has raised from $8.00 to $32.00 per ton, the highest price ever known. The Wisconsin clammers have lost thousands of dollars.

23. That the commission be given the authority, in cases of emergency, to shorten or close any open season, or reduce the bag limit, or prohibit the catching of fish in any certain lake or stream.

## FORESTRY AND PARK DIVISIONS.

1. A state-wide forestry policy.
2. The management of state lands in so far as the constitution will permit, by the state conservation commission.
3. That areas suitable for agricultural development be sold to bona fide settlers in small tracts (not over 160 acres).
4. That the scattering state lands be sold, since it is impossible to protect them from fire.
5. That the policy of leasing islands and lake lots be continued.
6. That the state forest nurseries be maintained and forest planting be encouraged throughout the state.
7. That the work of forest fire protection be extended over the entire wooded portions of the state through the coöperation of timber owners.
8. That the coöperative fire protection agreement with the Federal Government be continued. (Weeks Law)
9. That the forest fire laws be amended and strengthened.

10. That Trempealeau Mountain be accepted by the state as a state park and funds be provided for its management.
11. That the development of state roads within all of the parks be continued and adequate funds appropriated for this purpose as well as for the general upkeep and care of the properties.
12. That an appropriation of $40,000 be made to purchase the remaining interior holdings within the Devil's Lake and Peninsula parks.

We recommend that authority be vested in this commission to sell equipment or other paraphernalia when it is deemed to the advantage of the state, the proceeds of such sale to be credited to the department funds. We oftentimes have articles of equipment that are of no further use to the commission and which should be sold while still having a monetary value. As an instance, in 1915 the state had an old fish car that had been in use for over 20 years. It was necessary to purchase a new steel car as the railroad companies were prohibited from carrying it on passenger trains consisting of steel cars. The original purchase price of the old car was $5,000 and we had an opportunity to sell it to the Canadian Government for $3,500. The sale however could not be consumated until the 1915 legislature enacted a special law authorizing us to dispose of that one piece of worn-out equipment.

James Nevin,
*Chairman.*
W. E. Barber,
*Commissioner.*
F. B. Moody,
*Commissioner.*

Attest:
R. S. Scheibel,
*Secretary.*