

California Fish and Game 102(4):211 - 213; 2016

From the Archives

George C. Pardee served as Governor of California from 1903 - 1907. According to the California State Library, "His exposure to innovative environmental conservation efforts in Germany heavily influenced his political decisions; as Governor, he was a strong supporter of conservation measures." Pardee wrote the following essay in 1914, which appeared in Volume I, Issue I of *California Fish and Game*.

Fish and Game Conservation Dependent on Conservation of Other Natural Resources

BY EX-GOVERNOR GEORGE C. PARDEE

Everybody who has given the subject much thought admits that fish and game ought to be conserved, not preserved, for the public benefit. Practically every state in the union has some sort of fish and game laws, some sort of a fish and game commission.

We commonly speak of such laws and such commissions as "fish and game preservation" laws and commissions. That, however, is a misnomer. For of what good to the public would preserved fish and game be?

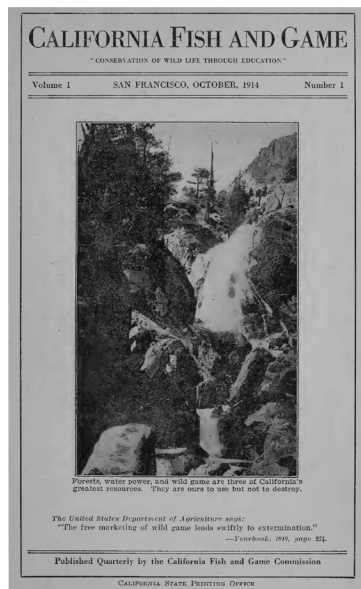
Like all other natural resources, our fish and game should be conserved, that is, used, at such times and in such quantities and under such conditions as the public needs require, but without unnecessary waste or destruction.

Preserved game and fish, like preserved forests or preserved water-powers, are of no practical public good. Preserved fish and game die; so do preserved trees; preserved water-powers run to waste. Conserved—that is, used and protected—fish and game, forests, waterboot-powers and all other natural resources are, of course, of practical benefit to the public. And, therefore, fish and game conservation—not preservation—commissions are of practical benefit to the public.

We do not permit anybody to destroy the publicly-owned forests. There is an unenforceable California law against the "cold-storing" of water-powers. It is the duty of the Fish and Game Commission to see to it that our animated natural resources are not destroyed or wasted.

Our game, however, can not be conserved, or even preserved, if the cover in which and the food on which it lives be not conserved. Our fish can not be conserved, or even preserved, if the waters in which they live be not kept at least free from pollution. If our wild places be permitted to be fire ravaged and destroyed, if our streams and bays be made the dumping grounds for noxious materials, then there will be no use for game and fish conservation laws, no need for a fish and game conservation commission—there will be no fish and game to be conserved.

Everybody, therefore, who believes—as almost everybody does—in the conservation of fish and game, must, if he takes a second thought, believe just as thoroughly in the



conservation—that is, the use without unnecessary waste or destruction or impairment of the necessary use of—our forests and our waters. The fish and game conservationist, therefore, must be a forest and water and waste places conservationist, whether they be publicly or privately owned. For it is just as much an injury to the public including the hunter and fisherman, amateur or professional, if our forests are destroyed, no matter whether they be publicly or privately owned. For upon the continued existence of our forests, whether publicly or privately owned, depends very largely the full running of our streams, without which our fish and game can not be fully conserved. And as forests may be forever used without being destroyed, it follows, of course, that the fish and game conservationists must deprecate the destruction of privately-owned forests and must oppose the further giving away of our publicly-owned forests into private ownership, which has always ended in their destruction.

Water is a natural resource, the most necessary of them all, which belongs to the people and can not be alienated from them. It is only the right to use water that can become private property. Upon the proper employment of this right to use, when it becomes private property, depends not only the fisherman's and hunter's vocation and sport, but also the prosperity and comfort, even the necessities, of all the people. The general public, therefore, as well as the fishermen and hunters, is interested in seeing to it that our water resources are conserved, that is, used, at such times, in such quantities, under such conditions as the public necessities require, without any unnecessary waste, without monopolies that will interfere with the public good.

How shall the public see to it that its water resources are conserved? Shall this important function be given over to the Fish and Game Commission, which is a commission with a highly specialized function, viz., that of conserving fish and game? Shall it be made the duty of the already over-burdened Railroad Commission to see to it that the right to use our waters is not improperly or wastefully acquired or exercised? Somebody, representing the public, must do it. To whom better than to a water commission, making a specialty of this highly important and very special matter, can the conservation of our waters be entrusted? In other words, the work of the Fish and Game Commission ought to be aided and supplemented by a water conservation commission, in addition to the already existing forestry conservation commission.

The work of a water commission is as highly specialized as is that of a fish and game commission, or a fire conservation commission, or a railroad commission. Recognizing that it is impracticable, if not impossible, to create one commission with special knowledge in all these diverse and very important matters, other states have created, as California has, a separate commission for each of them.

At the last session of our legislature, an act was passed creating a water commission, with power to see to it that the water resources of the state shall be conserved, that is, used at such times and in such quantities and under such conditions as the public necessities for power, irrigation, domestic purposes, etc., may require, but without unnecessary waste, and without monopoly detrimental to the public.

The passage of this law through the legislature was vigorously fought by an organized and expensive lobby, which was financed by an association of power and water companies. And no sooner was this water commission law passed by the legislature and signed by the governor than the same interests that opposed its passage organized and financed an expensive referendum campaign against it. For getting signatures to the referendum petition, which was circulated, among other places, in the redlight districts of San Francisco, Oakland and other cities, the hired petition circulators were paid 5 and 10 cents for each of the twenty-odd thousand signatures, forged and unforgerd, to the referendum petition.

As conservationists of the fish and game natural resources of this state, every fisherman and hunter, amateur and professional, is interested in the ratification by the people, at the November election, of this referendum water commission law. For every citizen who is interested in the conservation of our fish and game is, of course, interested equally in the conservation of our waters, on the saving of which the conservation of our fish and game largely depends.

Further than that, every fisherman and hunter, amateur and professional, is interested, along with all other law abiding citizens, in the honest carrying out of our laws. One of these laws, which it has become quite fashionable to violate, because it appears to be entirely safe to do so, is the referendum. For it is claimed that wholesale forgeries and perjuries were committed in the matter of the petitions by which the redlight abatements, the blue sky, the non-sale of game, and the water commission laws were suspended on referendum. In fact, regarding the first of these referendumed laws, the district attorney of San Francisco has been quoted in the daily press as asserting that not only were many, many forged names attached to the petition by which it was suspended by referendum, and that many perjuries were committed in the verification of those signatures, but also that there was in his possession sufficient evidence of these crimes against the people to send the forgers and perjurers to the penitentiary. But, up to date, so far as appears to be publicly known, but one of these law breakers has ever been indicted, and the penitentiary seems to have no terrors to his fellow conspirators against the people.

Every honest California hunter, every honest California fisherman, and every other honest Californian interested in the conservation of our animated natural resources is, of course, interested in seeing crime suppressed and criminals punished. As it appears to be impracticable, if not impossible, to get sent to the penitentiary either those who forge signatures to referendum petitions or those who instigate and pay for those forgeries and perjuries, there appears to be but one other way in which honest men and women can rebuke such crimes. And that is by voting to ratify laws the referenduming of which is tainted with crime. In this way only, it appears, can honest people do their part toward rendering such crimes against the public and themselves useless and unremunerative and, therefore, unfashionable.

For if neither the actual lawbreakers shall be punished nor the instigators and financiers of the crimes shall be rebuked, then, of course, the referenduming of laws by criminal means will become a fixed, organized, unremunerative, and recognized vocation. And instead of California being a government of the people, by the people, for the people, it will become a government of the people by perjury and forgery for those who are willing to employ organized bureaus of forgers and perjurers.

It is not so much a question as to whether the honest citizen agrees with the policy of the referendumed redlight abatement, blue sky, non sale of game, or water commission laws, as it is a question of whether the honest men and women of California are willing to be governed by forgery and perjury.

Everybody, therefore, who votes against a law that has been referendumed by forgery and perjury, votes to make remunerative and, therefore, fashionable organized bureaus for the government of California by forgery and perjury. And everybody who votes against a law referendumed by a crime-tainted petition, simply because he disagrees with the policy of that law, is debarred from making any objection or outcry if and when a law, with the policy of which he agrees, is referendumed by forgery and perjury.