

Meet Colorado Parks & Wildlife Director:

Bob Broscheid

By Fur Taker Staff and Dan Gates



For many trappers, the Colorado ban on trapping was the political catastrophe of a generation. On November 5, 1996, Initiative 14 successfully amended the state Constitution, banning the use of traps and trapping. The ban passed the ballot box measure by 52 for, and 48 percent against, the measure.

Because of the nature of the language used, and the “nearly toxic” rhetoric in political circles, for decades, what were left for fur trappers, wildlife managers, USDA/APHIS control trappers, and private animal control agents were a mish-mash of vague terms and a wide range of interpretations. Cage traps, for example, became one of the only “safe” tools, but even then, the legality of the sale of fur was questioned in some circumstances.

On a personal note, I had a conversation in 1996 with a life-long Colorado trapper who was exploring the possibility of moving to Honduras or Costa Rica. It was that bad.

As recently as 2014, one of the trappers who was involved in the 1996 battle pointed out the nearly toxic efforts of the CPW to restrict hunting, guns, and outdoor efforts.

So imagine my curiosity being piqued when I realized that Colorado Parks and Wildlife had sent three Conservation Officers to the Trappers College. Then three more the next year, and the next, making a total as of this September of twelve. A portion of these twelve have initiated “Trapping 101” classes for the general public.

Then I found out that Dan Gates, President of the Colorado Trappers & Predator Hunters Association (CTPHA) and FTA Governing Board member, had been invited to deliver the message of modern trapping to hundreds of Conservation Officers. And more recently, a photo arrived on my computer of a message that was displayed on every Conservation Officer’s vehicle in the state of Colorado: The language says, “Hunting, Fishing, and Trapping Pay for Wildlife Conservation.”

It was like seeing a Pepsi logo on a can



of Coke.

Dan encouraged me to have a conversation with Bob Broscheid, current Director of Colorado Parks and Wildlife. I did.

My conclusion is that, in the words of Churchill, “Now this is not the end. It is

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not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning” of a sea change.

Let me share a few excerpts from that conversation.

Asked what prompted him to encourage staff members to attend the Trappers College, he replied, “We clearly had a ‘knowledge deficit’ about trapping.” Retirees from the department, and the anti-trap initiative, meant that many people, including the department, had no experience with trapping. Historically a youngster was likely to have grown up trapping with his grandfather, but no longer.

“So our question was, how can we build

that knowledge back, in order to get trapping back as a socially acceptable necessity?” Knowledge in the department was the first step, and hence, Trappers College attendees, but also other avenues were and are explored. Director Broscheid is very active with the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA), a subset of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA). The data accumulated by the BMPs for Trapping research became a tool. “We rolled that out at every opportunity.” Here was data to support trapping as a humane and necessary tool, and the department, and its director, became engaged.

Step two is to consider how to tell the story.

“We need to tell our message, or it will be told for us. The first step is to not be afraid to talk about the benefits of trapping. Urban people can be opposed, until they have a raccoon in their house...then it is about if we can catch it and relocate it, and all the issues that follow.”

“And like a lot of people, when a coyote is in the neighborhood, folks are taking selfies...but when it kills the dog, they want it dead.”

Correcting the misunderstanding of trapping is a beginning. Many people think of the old tools, old methods, old ideas about how to manage wildlife, but we have modernized nearly all of it. “We need to start a different conversation.”

“Hunting, fishing, trapping...wildlife management...the loss of trapping is an alert—‘This is what will happen’ to all wildlife management.” It involves a huge task, but being proactive, not just reactive, is important.

“We need to target the 70% of the public who don’t hunt-fish-trap, but will accept it if they know it is being done right; so we need to tell the story.”

“We continue to build the coalition...and we can’t go off and hide; trappers, hunters, and anglers have to set aside their differences and build a larger coalition of resource managers.”

Urbanization has taken people away from life on the land, and it makes sense that they also don’t understand the details

that were once taken for granted. “Prairie dogs, geese, coyotes, and in Colorado, lion and bear...you better have a plan.”

The pendulum has swung so far that when some folks have wildlife damage problems in urban areas, others are quick to say, “Don’t call the Parks & Wildlife; they will just euthanize the animal!”

“Those calls are a place where we can find a crack that leaves an opening so that we can get to the bigger message: ‘This is not the Alaskan tundra...we can’t relocate problems. We need different management tools.’”

The education, the message, and the method: how do we begin? CPW began to explore the current trapping regulations, and step one was to call in trappers for help. “We had language in the regulations that were so out of date...the trappers told us ‘...we don’t even use these old terms anymore...’” The trappers were engaged to help correct the inconsistencies and outdated language and ideas.

“We worked together, and used the BMPs to explore what is effective and socially acceptable.” The result is new regulation language and interpretations that have dramatically expanded the tools and methods available to trappers in Colorado...such as laminated jaws instead of rubber jaws only.

It is a far cry from undoing a constitutional amended ban on traps; but it is a sea change in the right direction.

“What we had been doing is not working; the public will decide our fate, and we have to get engaged. We can’t sit back and expect someone to do it for us. We must deliver the message that trapping is a relevant and valuable tool in wildlife management. We need to build a larger coalition of hunters, fishermen and trappers to set aside their differences—we are all resource managers.”

So, politicians tend to say what people want to hear, right? Not so with Director Broscheid. He has talked the talk and walked the walk, starting with the efforts to educate Conservation Officers in Colorado about trapping by having them attend the Trappers College, but it goes much farther.

Dan Gates, President of the CTPHA, and a Fur Taker Board member, commented on some of the positive influences of Director Broscheid:

Knowing Director Broscheid for about four and a half years, I can honestly say that he is the real deal when it comes to logical thinking about how to partner and collaborate with multiple user groups and stakeholders.

Even though Colorado has suffered extensive blows to our trapping privileges because of a ballot initiative and an amendment to the state’s constitution in 1996, trapping remains alive and well in Colorado, although restricted.

“Walking the walk” and talking the talk is not normally what wildlife managers and legislators are best known for, but that is not the case with this Director.

This year marks the fourth in a row that the director has allowed three district wildlife managers to be sent to the Fur Takers of America Trappers College; twelve game wardens in a row being educated about the importance of trapping and wildlife management.

Additionally the director allowed a trapping working group to be established where the regulations were significantly altered to benefit land owners and land managers, while increasing animal welfare based upon the best management practices.

Not only did this increase the tools and opportunities that Colorado trappers could use, but it also revised regulations within Colorado Parks and Wildlife and a subsequent working group modified the Colorado Department of Agriculture regulations as well.

Being the chairman of the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) the Director also helped to implement a “Trapping Matters” workshop at last year’s national conference that was not only well attended by many area and state wildlife managers from the

west, but had a high level of participation from Colorado as well.

The Director has spoken and presented to several of our banquets and conferences and has allowed the follow-up training of over 250 game wardens in the state pertaining to new regulations and management opportunities.

To show just what he thinks of what we are doing as a sportsmen’s group, he even volunteered and got in our “Dunk a Warden” tank for a fundraiser at last year’s convention. The only problem with this scenario was that we could not get any game wardens to dunk their boss.

In addition to all of these items, our association has been fortunate to have Colorado Parks and Wildlife as a sponsor and supporter of our events for the last five-plus years and it is this sort of partnership that is mandatory if we are going to survive and provide a service to the general public while helping wildlife managers sustain furbearing resources.

Director Broscheid took the helm of Colorado Parks and Wildlife in 2013.

**(Below:)
Director Broscheid is headed
into the tank as part of a
“Dunk a Warden” fundraiser
at the CCTPA Convention.**

