

COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT - SUCCESS OR FAILURE?

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By now in this conference it is clear that the environment for cooperative programs in wildlife management is quite variable. In the foreseeable future the need for cooperative efforts should not diminish, but the opportunities may diminish if the present trend in Federal law continues.

Cooperation requires compromise and conciliation by those involved. It requires commitment to a common goal, often accompanied by some loss in each partner's prerogatives. It involves change, which is often viewed with skepticism. Although little progress is made without change, change does not guarantee progress. A great many changes that people have made in the past turned out to be ill-conceived or poorly executed--we make mistakes. Other mistakes were made by not changing!

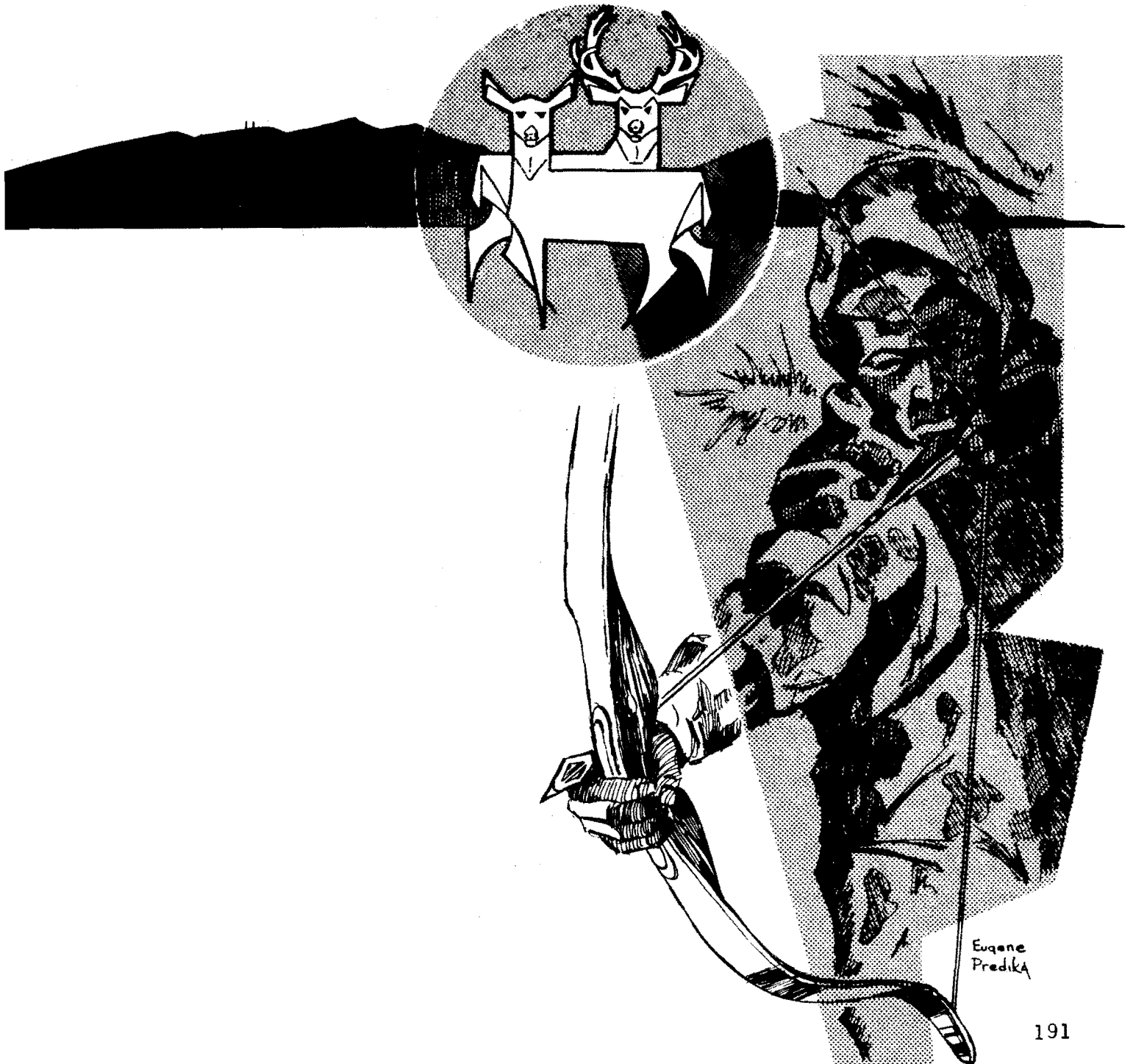
In this session our speakers will examine situations where cooperative management seemingly has worked well, and another situation where perhaps it has not worked well. Perhaps the common thread we should listen for is the combination of elements that has contributed to success, for certainly those threads will be needed to patch yet another State-Federal-private cooperative "garment" in the future.

I have been trying to pick up the threads running through the cases of successful cooperative management, and these are the points I heard from the presentations on this panel.

- (1) The legislative/political climate is all important to the success of cooperative management.
- (2) Cooperative management -- It will not work without constant attention; muskox management is a good example. Changing circumstances may make a good program ineffective.
- (3) Cooperation at the working level is generally good and can often make a success of a shaky situation.
- (4) The effective efforts of people at the working level can sometimes actually turn around a poor political situation.
- (5) If various public or private organizations or interest groups persist in strident accusations and criticisms of others rather than seeking common ground, polarization and alienation will occur and continue--they will become institutionalized in poor legislation, poor policy, and difficult or impossible tasks. Honest disagreement is fair, and

must be brought into the open if resolution or accommodation is to be accomplished. Innuendo and false accusations used for self-serving political purposes cripple or destroy cooperative efforts.

- (6) Politics clearly is an element. A grave danger is that the politics of other matters may overwhelm the politics of conservation.





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