

NATIONAL CONSERVATION ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM--1966

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

GUIDO R. RAHR

NATIONAL CONSERVATIONIST OF THE YEAR

Guido R. Rahr is a Wisconsin industrialist who has devoted more than 20 years of his life to conservation. He was appointed as a member of the Wisconsin Conservation Commission -- a non-salaried position -- on July 29, 1941 and has served continuously since that date. He was elected Chairman of the Commission on Jan. 9, 1953, re-elected in 1954, 1955, and in Jan. 1961, serving until 1965. His service as Chairman spans a longer period than any other person in history and he also served as its Secretary for six years. He was personally responsible for many of the progressive policies and programs that have made the Wisconsin Conservation Department one of the outstanding wildlife agencies in the nation.

When conservation became "big business" in Wisconsin, Commissioner Rahr was able to inject his business management experience into public administration of natural resources. Ten years ago he reorganized the Commission to operate like a corporate board of directors, separating administration from policy-making and permitting the development of the Wisconsin Conservation Department into one of the most efficient agencies in state government. The move enabled part-time commission members to handle large programs, involving establishment of policy and accounting for large sums of money, on a business-like basis through a committee system. Rahr was an early proponent of management based on facts, developed through sound, scientific research studies.

The magnitude of his contribution to resource management can best be seen in the Commission's area of responsibility. This includes 700,000 acres of land and 1,200 miles of water frontage in state forests, parks and wildlife areas; 1.25 million acres of inland surface waters with 8,834 natural lakes and 1,475 trout streams totalling 8,927 miles in length; 6.4 million acres of boundary waters with 500 miles of shoreline on Lakes Michigan and Superior; 2.6 million acres of county forests and more than 17 million acres of forest and watershed areas. All of these land and water areas have to be protected against fire, insects and disease and each must be developed so as to produce maximum annual yields of fish, game and forest products. The Commission's responsibilities extend directly to a million licensed fishermen, three quarters of a million hunters, five million park visitors, and a quarter million boat owners. Under his leadership, the Commission has made sustained yield operations a standard in Wisconsin on private and county forest lands, gained public acceptance of scientific deer herd management, nearly doubled the size of the state park system, guided recreation development and land purchase on a

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business like basis, and instituted many other programs and activities.

Since 1946, Rahr has also taken a deep personal interest in conservation education. For nine years, he contributed \$1,000 annually to an educational radio series which reached youngsters in hundreds of schools across the state. For the past 11 years, he has given \$1,500 annually to teachers for scholarships at various conservation workshops and training courses. He has made generous financial contributions to such worthwhile conservation education projects and programs as Trees for Tomorrow, Inc., Wisconsin Audubon Camp, the "Ranger Mac" school conservation program, school forests, Boy Scouts, YMCA outdoor recreation activities, and has organized and sponsored collecting and scientific expeditions to Africa and India in behalf of the Milwaukee Public Museum. He has also made grants available to the University of Wisconsin for conservation research.

Near his home at Manitowoc, he maintains a large demonstration farm, open to the public, for the purpose of promoting good forestry and wildlife management practices in connection with agriculture. Thousands of visitors use these facilities annually, including many school and youth groups.