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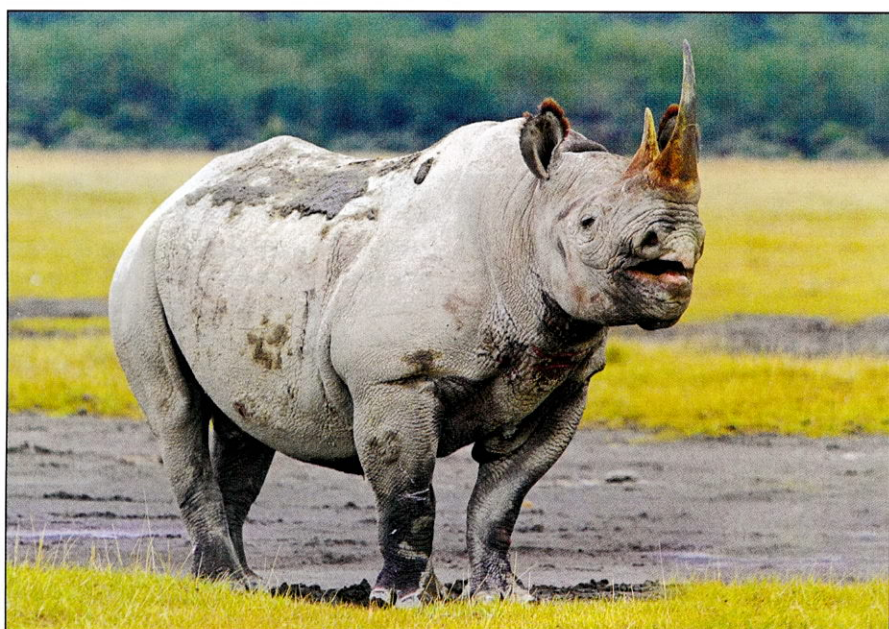
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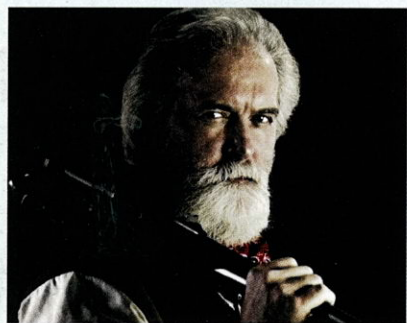
PUTTING CONSERVATION FIRST

What it takes to be a leader in the hunting world.



GARY KRAMER.NET

Last year's auction of a black rhino hunting permit in the face of intense criticism showed that DSC was not afraid to tackle tough issues.



Shane Mahoney

Born and raised in Newfoundland, Shane Mahoney is a biologist, writer, hunter, angler, internationally known lecturer on environmental and resource conservation issues, and an expert on the North American Conservation Model.

Leadership is not so much about doing things right; it is far more about doing the right things. Furthermore, successful leadership is about doing the right things at the right time. It is this marriage of action and timing that ultimately leads to success; a synchrony that rests upon leadership's one irreplaceable ingredient—vision. True, commitment and courage are also important attributes of leadership, but without vision even the most courageous and persistent man may toil to forge a path to nowhere. Action does not equate with leadership any more than education equates with brilliance or style equates with beauty. Vision does.

These are lessons the hunting world should heed. Doing the right things in a time of constant and escalating change will be the decisive element in hunting's future. While we are only midway into the second decade of a new century, anyone with a pulse can tell we have entered a new phase of

challenge for hunting and for the principles of sustainable-use conservation. It is a serious error to equate such challenges with only the extreme animal-rights movement or the more moderate antihunting community. We simply cannot ignore the broad sweep of social and cultural change we are experiencing nor fail to recognize that we require new leadership in the hunting world, one that is inspiring to a much wider public than just hunters themselves.

Despite what some hunters and many in the associated industries may feel, we simply cannot protect hunting by circling our wagons and firing from within. Nor can we protect hunting by simply doing what we used to do in the past, even if we do those things better this time around. Our old methods of bluster, challenge, and counterpunch, and of preaching to our own choir, will not cut it any longer. If we are to do our best for hunting and live up to the legacy of Roosevelt, then we can no longer ignore the clear message from the public, government institutions, international regulatory agencies and the wider environmental community: that hunting will be strangled out of existence if we fail to demonstrate its conservation value. We must prove that hunters are committed to the world's wildlife and wild places, not just as things and places to hunt but as worthwhile legacies in themselves.

As predicted, exaggeration and bravado are proving ineffective and often counterproductive to hunting's future. This trend will escalate. Opponents are seizing upon our exaggerations and thereby undermining our truths. Potential supporters are walking away from us. We need bold, visionary leadership that can walk proudly, speak knowledgeably, and transition hunting



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from an activity that is declining to one of renewed relevance in today's society. Rather than defending hunting simply for its own sake, this leadership must promote hunting for its conservation value. It must support conservation for its social and economic contribution to people everywhere. Hunters must be seen as the stewards of wildlife and the champions of conservation.

Developing such leadership requires more than a simple change in step or the adoption of a few clichés. It requires a real change in approach, one that will lead to novel and diverse partnerships. It requires meaningful, full participation in global conservation debates and far greater investments in outreach and education aimed at a wider audience. This leadership must demonstrate a willingness to stand up for wildlife even where no immediate or direct hunting opportunity is at stake; a willingness to defend hunting in the face of unjustified criticism and to agree where criticism is justified; and a commitment to safeguard critical habitats for wild creatures, hunted or not. Such leadership will make the difference we as hunters seek and the general public and its institutions demand.

So, where will this leadership come from? I believe it is already emerging and that Dallas Safari Club (DSC) is exemplifying the leadership we need. The rise in influence that DSC has attained in the last decade is best explained by its willingness to address the critical issues we face and to engage the debates that will bring hunting into a wider circle of public engagement and support. It is not just the millions of dollars the organization has provided to conservation efforts globally, or its efforts to work with governmental agencies and NGOs in various African countries and support well-respected programs like World Wildlife Fund's CAMPFIRE, nor even its support of antipoaching efforts for elephant or scientific research to measure the effects of harvest on African


lion populations, although certainly these are all worthy endeavors.

No, the organization's growing significance lies in its efforts to support long-term conservation in the wider sphere. This includes support for the Wildlife Society's Conservation Leadership Training Program, designed to develop tomorrow's conservation leaders within our state and federal agencies. DSC also provides major funding to Dallas Ecological Foundation's Outdoor Adventures program, which has introduced nearly 100,000 young people to outdoor and wildlife experiences, now taught in 200 schools and on its way to becoming a nationwide program. These are investments in people—people who will influence future policy decisions and who will understand, because of DSC, why hunting is such an important conservation tool.

DSC also helped initiate, contributed to, and participated in Canada's First National Fish and Wildlife Conservation Congress held in Ottawa in 2012. This Congress brought together North America's conservation elite to discuss hunting and angling within a national conservation agenda. The Club's investments in environmental cleanup efforts for international wetland (RAMSAR Convention) sites, and its work with the Conservation Fund to protect sensitive riverbottom lands in Texas, are also examples of efforts directed at a wider agenda than hunting rights or privileges, though these are certainly involved. These programs help conserve wildlife by protecting habitats and developing good conservation policies. These efforts matter to hunters, certainly, but to a much wider public as well. They make hunting relevant.

Even bolder steps have been taken, however. Many will remember the highly controversial auction of a black rhino hunting permit at the DSC convention in 2014, which raised \$350,000 to help conserve this

critically endangered species by funding scientific research and antipoaching efforts in Namibia. In the swirl of public criticism that surrounded this auction, Dallas Safari Club stood firm and responded thoughtfully to what were often outrageous verbal attacks. In doing so, DSC helped bring the hunting/conservation debate to millions of people who might otherwise never have thought about hunting's potential to help rescue endangered species. This is the kind of leadership Roosevelt believed in, and more importantly, acted upon.

Dallas Safari Club has risen to a premier position by doing the right things at the right time. It has courageously broadened its field of engagement to embrace a wider community of conservation interests while at the same time supporting hunting and advocating for sustainable use as a legitimate conservation mechanism. It has reached out to a wider public and taken practical steps to increase hunting's relevance, nationally and internationally. Its engagement in international conservation also continues to grow. Our hunting community needs to emulate this style of leadership: reach farther, think more deeply, and put conservation first. 

For more information about Dallas Safari Club's mission and programs, visit biggame.org. For information about Outdoor Adventures, visit www.dallasecologicalfoundation.org.

About DSC

An independent organization since 1982, DSC has become an international leader in conserving wildlife and wilderness lands, educating youth and the general public, and promoting and protecting the rights and interests of hunters worldwide. Get involved at www.biggame.org.