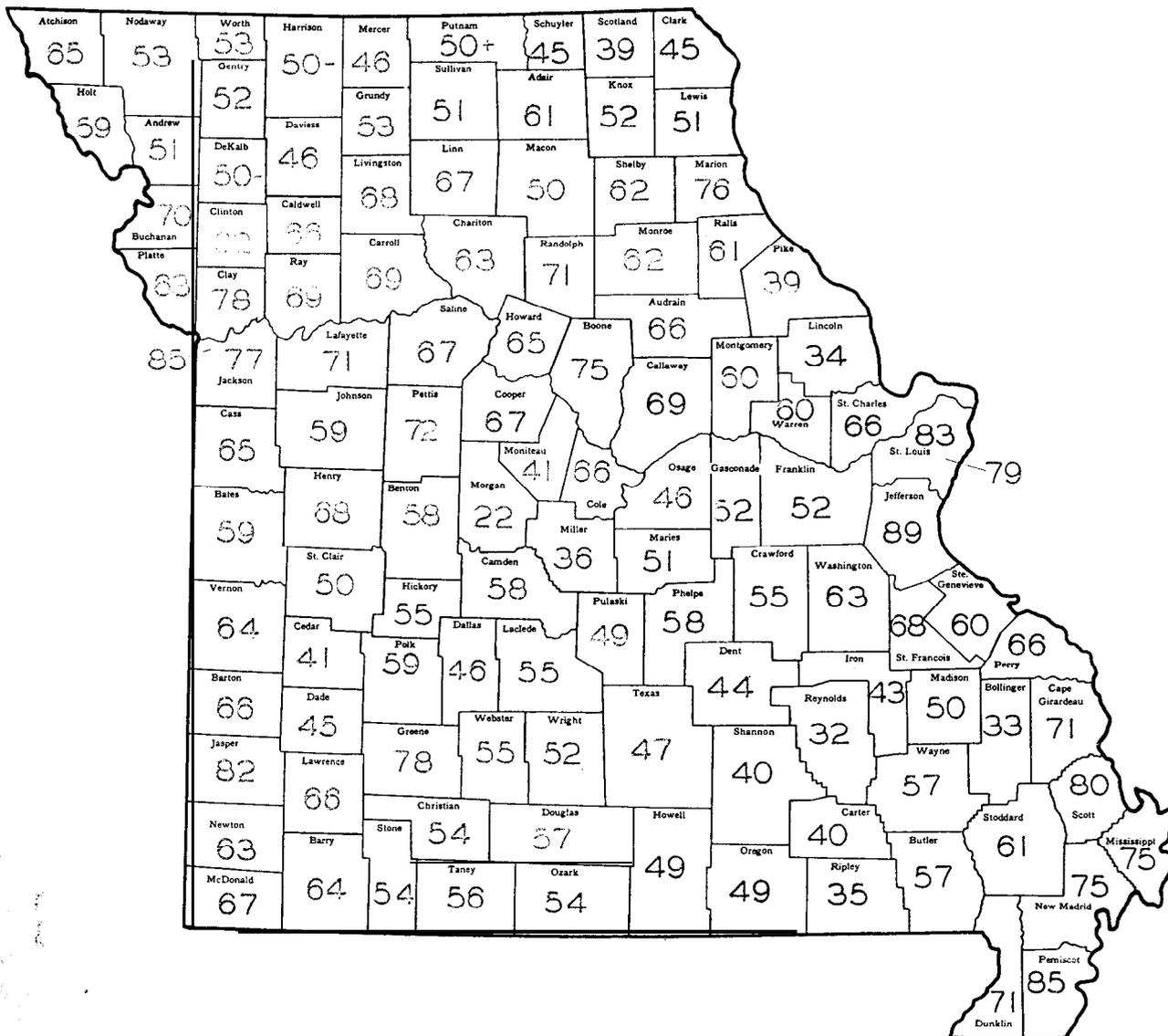


# How Do You Start One of These Things?

On the first day of July, 1937, E. Sydney Stephens was confronted with the necessity of coming up with some sort of organization. Amendment NO. 4 had passed by a sizable majority, indicating that the public was ready for a non-political, scientifically-based wildlife and forestry program. But how do you go

about starting one?

It's a good bet that Stephens had many discussions with Dr. Rudolf Bennett, associate zoology professor at the University of Missouri. The two had become good friends during the months prior to passage of the amendment. Bennett was a major advisor on the programs



envisioned by Stephens, but Bennitt was a college professor, with no experience in organizing a department of state, nor in handling the day-to-day operations of such a body.

Stephens was a businessman who had run an organization, but a publishing firm is not a government agency, and Stephens had in mind breaking entirely new ground. There was a new science available, though in its infancy. It was called wildlife management, and Stephens meant to base his new Department solidly on its foundation of theory and fact.

Governor Lloyd C. Stark took a keen interest in the new concept, but delayed announcing the appointment of a commission until the amendment became effective, July 1, 1937. On June 23, 1937, he called a conference of interested sportsmen and conservationists in Jefferson City. At a luncheon in the governor's mansion, Stark made public an opinion given him by Edward C. Crow, special counsel in the office of the attorney general, holding that the constitutional amendment approved by the voters was self-enforcing and that no enabling legislation by the legislature was necessary. It said the commission had full power to take over the control and regulation of the restoration and conservation of birds, fish, game, forestry and all wildlife resources of the state.

The opinion held that the commission would have authority to enforce all laws now on the books relating to conservation activities, to receive all funds from hunting and fishing licenses and other sources, and to expend those funds without appropriation by the legislature. It also said that any laws which interfere with conservation are automatically repealed. Stark said he would announce his appointments to the four-man commission later, and that he also would name an advisory committee to aid the new Conservation Commission in formulating its policies.

Governor Stark called for subordination of personal differences, prejudices and animosities to the main objective and common good.

There is no difference between us with regard to the importance of this work. There is no doubt the people of this state demand



*Zoology professor Rudolf Bennitt was an expert in wildlife management and became the technical advisor to the new Conservation Commission.*

that our game and fish resources must be protected and restored without delay. They insist that our remaining forests be saved from destruction by proper care and scientific replenishment . . . they desire that our beautiful streams and other natural resources shall be protected from exploitation and abuse . . . to ensure this, **politics must be completely barred** . . . we must carry out the spirit, as well as the letter of the law.

The conference suggested four points for the new commission to consider: (1) That wildlife restoration and conservation involves a problem of proper use of land and water resources, including provision of cover, food, protection and refuges.

“(2) That properly trained personnel must be provided, with full authority to enforce conservation laws.

(3) Proper public relations must be established. The public must be educated to the fact that conservation laws must be enforced and that conservation is not merely a matter of hatching out fish and birds to be caught and shot.

(4) That control of streams should be

considered by the commission.

The first three points were suggested by Dr. Bennett. The fourth suggestion was by former State Senator **Langdon** R. Jones of Kennett.

Possibly in anticipation of his appointment to the new Conservation Commission, Sydney Stephens moved that the group make no specific recommendations because it would transgress the functions of the Commission.

Undoubtedly Stephens knew he was to be appointed to the new Commission, so he had some time to plan his course of action.

The first thing was for the commissioners to get to know one another and devise a working relationship. Governor Stark named the new Commission on July 2, 1937. Supreme Court Judge George Robb **Ellison** administered the oath of office in **GOV.** Stark's office.

Appointing former Fish and Game Department Commissioner Wilbur Buford to that first Conservation Commission was a master stroke. It headed off political pressure to get Democrat Buford appointed the first director of the new Department. It also assured the loyalty of Fish and Game Department employees, who would have to carry on operations until the new Commission could get its bearings, and his four years experience running the Department would be useful to his successor.

Republican Albert P. Greensfelder, St. Louis businessman and member of the State Planning Commission, was deeply interested in forest and stream preservation when he was appointed to that first Commission. Of him the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* said: While he has not been prominently identified as a sportsman, it is also true that the conservation amendment is designed to conserve and restore all forms of wildlife, not alone those types which interest sportsmen.

The fourth commissioner was Republican **John F. Case**, editor of the *Missouri Ruralist* and widely known farm leader. His appointment was valuable because the success of conservation programs was going to be dependent in large measure on the attitude of farmers.

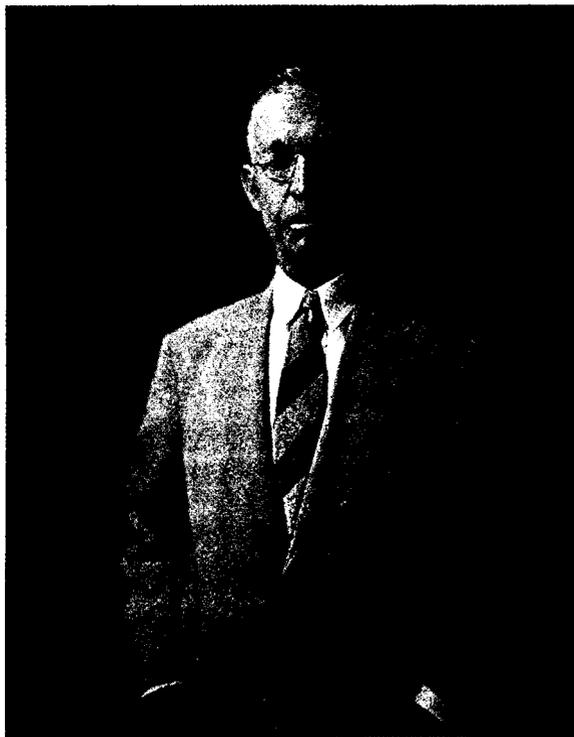
Stephens and Buford were appointed for

four-year terms, Case to a two-year term and Greensfelder to a six-year term. Governor Stark suggested that Stephens might make a good chairman and Greensfelder a vice-chairman, and the new Commission agreed.

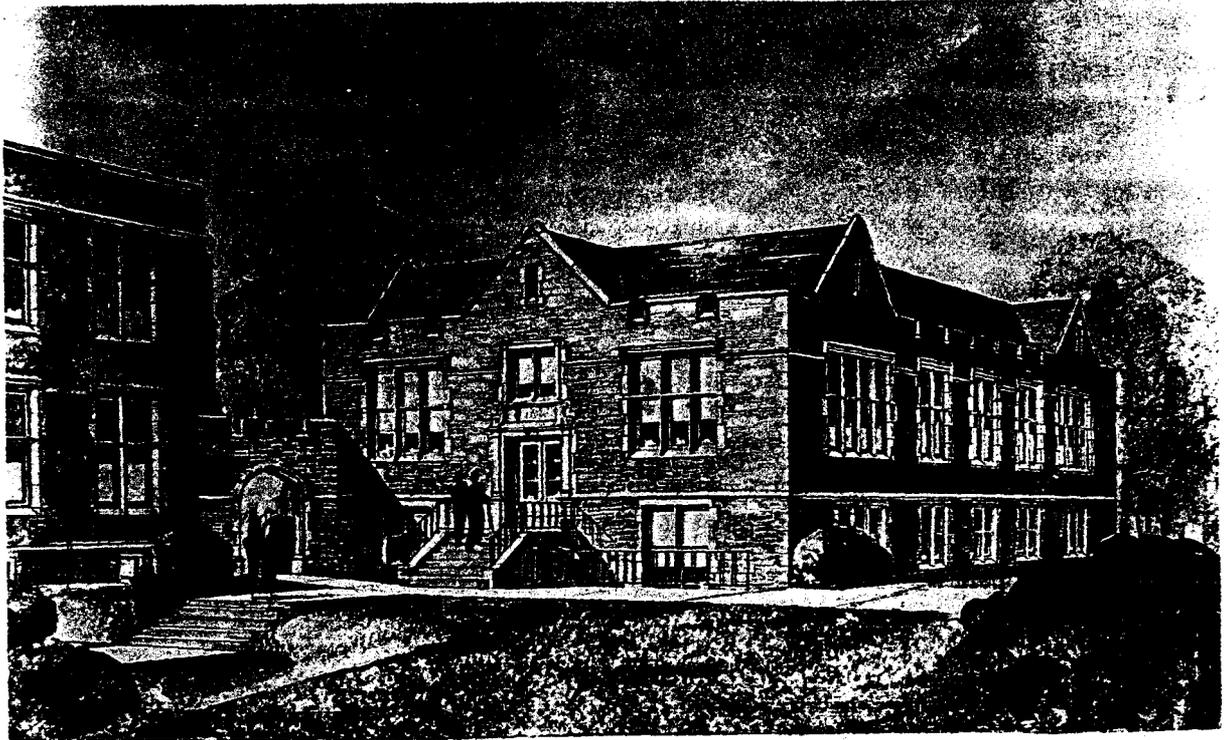
The Commission held its first meeting immediately in the governor's office. They elected Stephens chairman, Greensfelder vice-chairman, Buford secretary and Case member.

They named Jefferson City native Joel Frank Ramsey, president of Ramsey Tie and Timber Company, acting director with a salary of \$300 per month. Ramsey was also to serve as acting director of state parks. Buford offered to remain in Jefferson City during the month of July to assist Ramsey in taking over the duties of acting director.

Ramsey recommended, and the Commission approved, retaining Fish and Game Publicity Director E. L. Preston and Bruce Lewis, former assistant chief of parks, as refuge inspector. All employees of the Fish and Game Department were to be retained temporarily,



*Joel Frank Ramsey was president of a tie and timber company when named as acting director. Later he was assistant director and chief of the Administrative and Protection Division.*



S. E. CORNER

CONSERVATION LABORATORY  
UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI  
WEST AND SOUTH FRONTS

*The Conservation Laboratory on the northwest corner of MU's White Campus housed the new cooperative Wildlife Research Unit. It was later renamed Stephens Hall honoring E. Sydney Stephens.*

at the pleasure of the Commission, in their same capacities and salaries.

Buford moved that all monies arising from the operations of the Commission should hereafter be designated as the Conservation Commission Fund. The acting director was asked to secure stationery, a seal, and to continue the rental of quarters for the Conservation Commission. He was authorized to make requisitions and purchases.

Dr. W. C. Curtis of the University of Missouri appeared before the Commission to explain the opportunity offered the state to secure a wildlife research and game management station through the Federal Bureau of the Biological Survey. Greensfelder moved to make an annual commitment not to exceed \$6,000 annually for the use of such a research station at the University of Missouri, with Stephens to represent the Commission. This was the beginning of the Missouri Cooperative

Wildlife Research Unit.

Greensfelder then moved to accept the offer of Dr. Rudolf Bennitt to serve as technical adviser to the Commission. Regular meetings were scheduled for 10 a.m. the second Monday of each month, and members of the Advisory Committee were invited to sit with the Commission from time to time.

As a last item of business at that first meeting, it was agreed that Stephens was to conduct the search for and investigation of individuals who might be qualified to serve as a director.

Acting Director J. Frank Ramsey had been born in Cedar City, a suburb of Jefferson City, and raised in mid-Missouri. Ramsey's father had started the family lumber business, which was just about on its last legs at this time, a victim of the Great Depression. He had grown up in the business, traveling as a buyer over much of the state, and in the

course of his travels had learned a great deal about the state's dwindling forest and wildlife resources.

Ramsey was an ardent sportsman and member of the locally famous Painted Rock Club, a resort of Jefferson City nimrods located on the Osage River. Only a year before he had been seriously wounded by a companion in a deer hunting accident at Painted Rock.

He was a close friend of Governor Stark, who probably called him to the attention of Stephens and the other commissioners. In any event, he was available to serve as director until a permanent one was found, and had experience as an administrator.

The Jefferson City Post-Tribune said of him: When it was announced that the Conservation Commission had named him as the first director everybody, regardless of politics, applauded. A man had been chosen who typified good sportsmanship . . . . Frank Ramsey's first job as a boy took him through field and forest and along the streams of his native state. There he had an opportunity to study wildlife which then abounded in Missouri. He came into contact with the killer who nearly exhausted the state's rich resource before the people wisely wrote conservation into the constitution.

Ramsey fought game destruction long before it was discussed as a public question . . . . He came to the office of conservation director with a knowledge gained in his travels through the state. Many regretted that he was not retained in that position.

In September, L. F. Tatum, administrative assistant for the U. S. Forest Service in Missouri, told the Commission that it needed a Forestry Division to take advantage of federal Clark-McNary Act funds available to the state. Acting Director Ramsey was ordered to work with Tatum in preparation of a five-year forestry plan.

U. S. Forest Supervisor Paul V. Kelleter reported the plans and activities of the Forest Service with respect to wildlife, which included creating water holes for animals, food plantings, creation of refuges, trapping and

## NAMED RAMSEY DIRECTOR OF CONSERVATION

New Commission at First  
Session Gives Jefferson  
City Man Place

STEPHENS ELECTED  
BOARD CHAIRMAN

Body Follows Governor's  
Suggestion In Election  
and Appointment

Frank Ramsey of this city, was named today acting conservation director by the new conservation commission at its first meeting

Ramsey will serve as head of the new non-political game and fish regulatory body until he is appointed for the permanent post or his successor is chosen

Following the suggestion of Governor Stark, the commission made E. Sydney Stephens of Columbia, chairman; A. P. Greenfelder, St. Louis, vice chairman, and Wilbur C. Buford, former game and fish commissioner, secretary; John F. Case, Wright City, is the other member of the board created by a constitutional amendment to supplant the old game and fish department.

The commission voted to empower present game wardens to enforce laws and regulations and all employees of the old department were told to stay on their jobs in their present capacities.

The group also voted to establish a game management commission to experiment with the propagation and protection of game birds and animals if the federal government and the University of Missouri will cooperate.

Each of the agencies would contribute \$6,000 to the project under the plans adopted today.

Mr. Ramsey, a life-long resident of Jefferson City, has been in the railroad tie contracting business for years.

He has always been considered authority on wild life conser-

*Jefferson City Post-Tribune reported selection of Ramsey as director and Stephens chairman of the Commission, at Governor Stark's suggestion.*

<sup>1</sup> Painted Rock State Forest was acquired by the Department of Conservation as a public wildlife area in 1981.

moving deer, and the importation of deer from Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Also at the September meeting, Stephens told the Commission that he had secured a list of national conservation authorities from Rudolf Bennitt, and had solicited names of possible directors from those notables.<sup>2</sup>

Stephens had sent the names of possible directors to the authorities, with the request that they rank them in order of their preferences. He pointed out to the Commission that although residents of Missouri had applied for the directorship, none of them was approved or rated by the wildlife experts.

The Commission decided to invite the following individuals for interviews: Leslie Bean, assistant regional forester, U. S. Forest Service; Paul V. Brown, regional director, National Park Service; Joe A. Grant, recreational project manager, National Park Service; Aldo Leopold, S. B. Locke, Seth Gordon, H. D. Ruhl, J. C. Salyer, Bureau of Biological Survey, Peter J. Hoffmaster, director of the Michigan Conservation Department and Irwin T. Bode. Others were also to be invited to a conference in St. Louis to advise the Commission on its proper activities and the qualifications of a director.

The group met September 25 at the Missouri Athletic Club in St. Louis. Those actually attending, besides the Commission, were Aldo Leopold, H. D. Ruhl, Paul V. Brown, Lisle Watts, Leslie Bean, Nash Buckingham, S. B. Locke, Joe A. Grant and Dr. Rudolf Bennitt.

The conference was a round table discussion, resulting in the suggestion the Commission should engage in five major activities: (1) research, including scientific investigation into the causes of the decrease in wildlife in Missouri and the means by which such wildlife



*Paul V. Kelleter, supervisor of the Missouri national forests in 1937, took an active interest in the new Conservation Commission and helped get the Department forestry program started.*

might be restored, (2) that the Commission should engage in the propagation of game, fish and forests and that individuals trained in those fields should be employed. (This activity, it was agreed, should include game management, fish management and reforestation), (3) that the Commission should set up an enforcement division headed by a man trained in that field and composed of individual staff members carefully selected and

<sup>2</sup> The authorities Stephens consulted were: Herbert L. Stoddard, Cooperative Quail Study Association; F. C. Walcott, president of the American Wildlife Institute; H. W. MacKenzie, Wisconsin director of conservation; Ira N. Gabrielson, chief of the Bureau of Biological Survey; Gardiner Bump, superintendent, Bureau of Game, New York; Earl H. Clapp, acting chief of the U. S. Forest Service; Judge George W. Wood, president of the Izaak Walton League of America; Victor H. Cahalane, chief of the National Park Service; Aldo Leopold, professor of game management, University of Wisconsin; Jay N. Darling, president of the General Wildlife Federation; H. D. Ruhl, Game Division, Michigan Department of Conservation; S. B. Locke, conservation director, Izaak Walton League of America; I. T. Bode, senior biologist, U. S. Department of Agriculture; Seth Gordon, executive director, Pennsylvania Board of Game; Ernest G. Holt, secretary of wildlife management, Soil Conservation Service; William L. Finley, vice-president, General Wildlife Federation; Arthur A. Allen, professor of ornithology, Cornell University; Carl P. Russell, Wildlife Division chief, National Park Service; Gifford Pinchot, ex-governor of Pennsylvania, and Henry P. Davis, secretary, American Wildlife Institute.

fully trained, (4) that the Commission should engage in the undertaking of restoring the forestry and timber interests of the state, not only in wooded areas and on publicly owned lands but on privately owned farms as well, and that in charge of that activity the Commission should place a man technically trained in forestry, (5) that the Commission should conduct the activity of public relations, with particular reference to education and farmer participation in wildlife conservation. (6) It was also agreed that the director should be a man with sufficient technical training and experience to enable him to advise the Commission as to its activities and functions, and with sufficient acquaintance with experts in the various fields to be able to recommend for employment technically trained men.

The Commission adopted these suggestions and the next day interviewed Grant,

Leopold, Bean, Brown, Ruhl, Buckingham and Locke as possible directors. Four others invited, but not at the meeting, were scheduled for later interview: Hoffmaster, Bode, Salyer and Gordon. Salyer's name was later dropped.

On October 11, two men remained in the running for director, Peter Hoffmaster and Irwin T. Bode. The Commission authorized Stephens to offer the job to Bode at a salary of \$6,000 per year, and on November 15, 1937, he accepted the post.

Apparently Bode's employment was for a four-year term, because in January, 1942, he was reappointed for another four-year term.

Bode asked that J. Frank Ramsey be retained as assistant to the director until such time as the permanent organization is effective.

With the employment of Bode, things were really under way.



*Irwin T. Bode, senior biologist with the U. S. Department of Agriculture, was chosen as the Conservation Commission's new director. Bode had started a reorganized department in Iowa in 1932.*