

Operations Section

As early as 1942, the Forestry Division recognized a need for services that were later to become duties of the Operations Section. State Forester George O. White hired Robert F. Wells, a former U. S. Forest Service employee and CCC foreman, to do construction work.

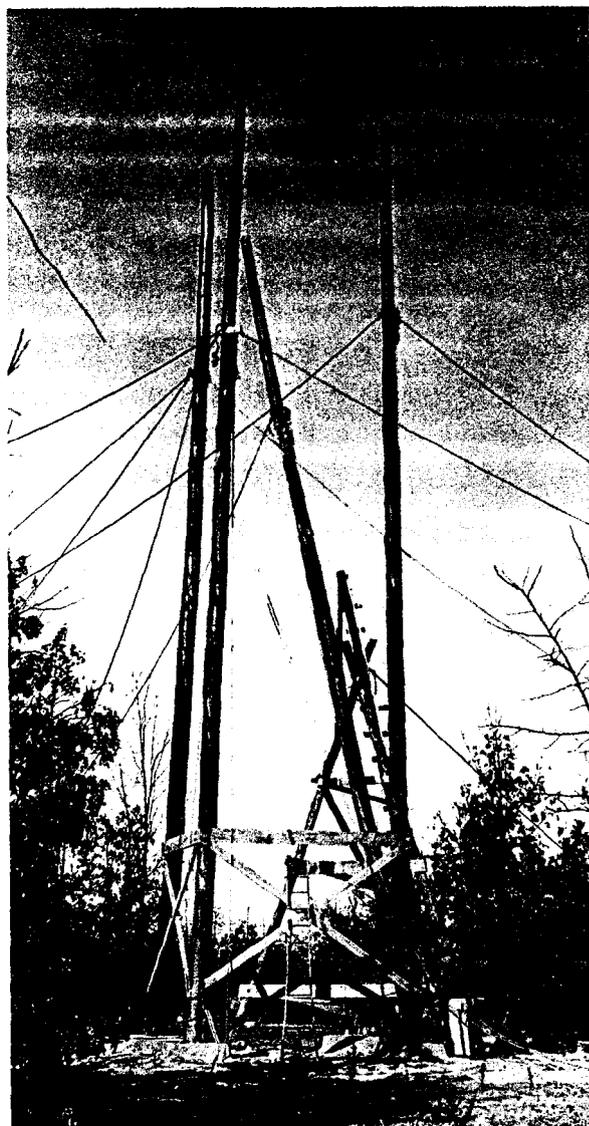
There was a need for lookout tower construction, including building roads into the towers. There was a need for construction of fire trails to get crews back into the forests. Forest district headquarters, dwellings for towermen, and service buildings were needed. There was a need to service and maintain the vehicles and equipment used to fight fires, and Wells was given the job of supervising all this activity.

The Department had perhaps 42,000 acres in refuges at Deer Run, Indian Trail and Sam Baker, plus six fish hatcheries. There was a minimum number of buildings on these properties, mostly machine sheds and dwellings for a resident manager. There was no established maintenance procedure and each division made its own arrangements for acquisition, construction and maintenance. For years the Department emphasized acquisition and development of public use areas and other properties, but gave relatively little attention to maintenance. The Forestry Division was the first to develop a systematic approach to such holdings.

At last recognizing the need for some Department-wide maintenance system, Director William Towell created an Operations Section as part of the reorganization of 1964, naming Robert F. Wells Operations officer.¹

The purpose of organizing the section was to group together various services common to all Department units to eliminate duplication of effort, personnel and equipment. The new section was given the responsibility for administration and coordination of several

¹ Wells served as Operations officer until his retirement in 1976. He was followed by Forester David D. Hurlbut until 1986 when Everett E. Clark became chief.



Forestry made use of the first construction crews to build much-needed lookout towers for forest fire control.

functions including maintenance and construction improvements, management of the two-way radio system, purchase and repair of equipment, operation of aircraft and the con-



Robert F. Wells was Operations officer from 1964 until his retirement in 1976.

struction of signs.

In its first year, Operations Section had twenty-nine employees, most transferred from Forestry Division. It has since grown to 108 permanent and twenty-four full-time/temporary employees to handle the demands of the new responsibilities added over the past twenty-one years. Each of the particular skills is operated as a unit: administration, construction and maintenance, equipment, headquarters and research center maintenance, radio, aircraft, signing and safety.

When the section began in 1964, the construction and maintenance units primary responsibility was to assist the managing divisions with maintenance of improvements and to handle small development projects involving light construction. Maintenance standards and procedures were established to enable the Department to obtain the best results from its improvements at the least annual cost.

In October, 1982, construction personnel and equipment were transferred to Operations from Engineering Section and all construction to be completed by in-house crews was assigned to the section.

For several years after Operations Section was formed, a variety of approaches were used for maintenance of properties. On areas with resident personnel, Operations would send in skilled personnel as needed to assist with maintenance projects. Conservation agents hired local labor and equipment to maintain accesses, community lakes and unmanned upland wildlife areas. But as managing divisions workloads increased, it became more difficult for them to allocate their resources to maintenance. As a result, most maintenance projects on both manned and unmanned areas are handled by Operations. Routine maintenance of accesses and lakes



Operations Section maintains 1,160 miles of roads. In this 1956 photograph, equipment is guided over a new roadbed leading to a lookout tower.

in north Missouri is provided by this section. In south Missouri, Forestry Division maintains such areas, using contractors and its own personnel when not required for forestry duties.

The Department currently owns approximately 515,700 acres of land with over 1,200 buildings and 1,160 miles of roads, in addition to many miles of levees, a multitude of structures, parking lots and other improvements. For all these the Operations Section develops equipment purchase specifications, establishes maintenance standards, inspects and repairs equipment, develops replacement criteria, and disposes of used vehicles and other equipment. During the most recent

fiscal year it purchased \$2,666,457 worth of equipment, and recovered \$519,704 from sales of used vehicles and equipment.

In 1948, Forestry set up a preventive maintenance program and established a small Central Repair Shop in an old CCC building at Sullivan. Its equipment, and that of other divisions, was brought there for repair for several years. In 1957, a new shop was constructed at Salem, which was more centrally located. Although operated by the Forestry Division, it did maintenance work for all Department units.

When Operations Section was formed it took over the Central Repair Shop and began serving all divisions and sections. Its function



Operations Section is responsible for purchasing and maintaining millions of dollars worth of equipment, from radios to bulldozers. Marvin Holland, above, guided maintenance and construction projects for Forestry before Operations Section was established in 1964.

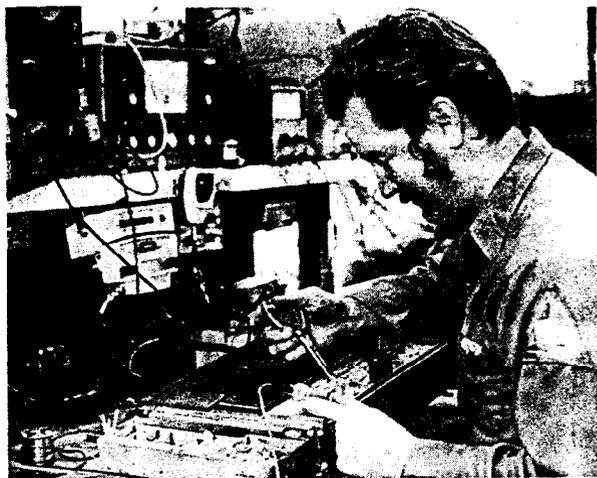
is to receive, equip and assign new vehicles and equipment, perform inspections and repairs. A similar facility was constructed at Brookfield in 1975, and one-man shops have been established at August A. Busch Memorial Wildlife Area, Waters-Moss Wildlife Area, Jefferson City headquarters and Ted Shanks Memorial Wildlife Area. Another is being built at Springfield in conjunction with the new regional headquarters there. Operations provides general fleet management services essential to the efficient operation of 922 highway vehicles, 480 trailers and 210 motorized non-highway units.

There were no two-way radios in use when the Conservation Commission came into being. The first such use was by Forestry Division about 1940. These first radios were rather crude affairs, powered by dry cell batteries on the AM frequency. A few were placed in lookout towers and others carried in vehicles. When one operator wished to communicate with another he had to stop his truck, place the radio on the exterior, toss an antenna wire over a tree limb and then attempt to call the other person.

About 1944, sets for permanent installation in vehicles were obtained on a limited basis. They were still AM units and their assignment was confined to the Forestry Division. In 1945, the first radios of this type were purchased for Protection Section. In 1947, war surplus FM radios became available and were assigned to Forestry and Protection divisions. The present radio system evolved from this beginning.

By 1964, a squeeze on available frequencies became so great that the Department was advised to go to a different frequency range. Design changes were worked out and the first new equipment was installed on the West Plains forest fire protection district in 1965. This new equipment furnished more efficient operation and allowed positive communications, free from interference from others. Prior to that, conservation agents often could hear the Georgia conservation officers better than they could Missouri's, as both states were on the same frequency.

The Department now owns and operates the largest radio system in Missouri. It includes sixty-one base stations, 138 mobile re-



The Department owns the largest radio system in the state. Operations oversees use of over 1,400 mobile units and radio repair shops at seven locations in the state.

lays, 731 mobile radios and 536 portables. It's comforting for conservation agents, foresters and others working alone at all hours of the day or night to know that assistance can be reached by the press of a button. Radio cuts down on miles of travel time and reduces other communications expenses.

Operation Section presently maintains 1,446 pieces of radio equipment at radio repair shops located in Jefferson City, Sullivan, Piedmont, Willow Springs, Brookfield, Blue Springs and Springfield. It has the responsibility for interpreting and maintaining compliance with rules and regulations of the Federal Communications Commission. It writes specifications for new equipment, handles the purchase, installs and repairs the units used by the Department.

The first Department aircraft, purchased in 1946, was a Stinson L-5. Harold V. Terrill, who was an aerial artillery spotter in World War II, was the first employee to use an airplane for Department work. The next purchase was a Stinson Station Wagon plane in 1949. Aircraft were first assigned to the Fish and Game Division, which supervised their use and maintenance, but they were piloted by personnel of the division using them. In 1954, a Piper Super-Cub was purchased and assigned to the Forestry Division. It was based at Ellington and flown by personnel of the Deer Run district.

In 1955, Conservation Agent Allen C. Hoefelman, a former military flight instructor, was assigned full-time as Department chief pilot. The responsibilities for all Department aircraft were transferred to him under the Director's office.

Late in 1959, the Forestry Division obtained a C-45 Twin Beech aircraft through the federal excess property program. This plane, which had a seating capacity of seven, was placed in service in mid-1960, along with another plane that had been based in Columbia. Both were housed in a new hangar built that year at the Jefferson City airport. The aircraft based at Ellington was moved to Jefferson City in 1962.



Chief Pilot Allen Hoefelman, left, and Pilot Ralph Hibdon, right, made up the Department's airforce for many years. The plane is a Cessna 180.

Operations Section took over aircraft administration after its creation in 1964. The section currently operates three aircraft, all based in Jefferson City. The unit is staffed by a chief and three pilots.² Uses of aircraft have been expanded from fire detection, law enforcement and personnel transportation to a wide range of activities connected with fish, forestry and wildlife management. These in-

clude wildlife census, water pollution investigation, forest disease and storm damage surveys, location of wildlife release sites, aerial land surveys for potential acquisition, wildlife and fish transportation, photography and aerial radio telemetry studies on wildlife and fish. Total flying time has grown from 250 hours in 1946, to 1,407 hours in 1986.

As one drives around the state one of the most visible signs of the Conservation Department is the routed wood, brown and white signs on public use areas that have become a Department trademark. There was no sign program in 1937, but as the Department acquired facilities the need for signs grew. Each area prepared its own signs and they were produced in all sizes, shapes and colors.

The original sign shop was set up by Forestry in 1954, at the repair shop in Sullivan. This was relocated to the Salem shop about 1957, and the staff later increased from one to four.

Since 1965, this facility has provided all signing for the Department. A sign manual and catalog was developed, which established policy, guidelines and procedures. Uniformity and consistency have been greatly improved in signing all public use areas as a result. The sign shop employs modern technology in its silk screening process, which is the method most used in sign construction, but it also produces plastic signs as well as specialty items. Vandalism and wear and tear create a need for many signs and in a recent year the shop produced 34,000 signs.

The Operations Section coordinates all highway signing for the Department with the State Highway and Transportation Department.

The Department of Conservation was one of the first agencies of state government to recognize employee safety as a priority and to react positively with an active loss-control program. In the spring of 1971, the first Department-wide safety program was launched with appointment of a safety committee. Accident reporting procedures were established and several training programs conducted.

On May 1, 1976, a full-time safety coord-

² When Hoefelman retired in 1982, Cullen H. Wilson became chief pilot.

dinator, James R. Watson, was employed and responsibility for the safety program was lodged with Operations Section.³ Accident prevention programs now assigned to Operations include employee loss-control, industrial safety, vehicle accident prevention, worker s compensation, safety education program development, hazard identification on public land,

and claim investigations of public liability mishaps. Additionally, the safety coordinator performs risk management functions in the purchase of vehicle/aircraft liability insurance, aircraft hull and liability insurance, building fire and peril insurance, and monitoring the self-insured aspects of worker s compensation and public liability.



Late Safety Coordinator James Watson and Director Larry Gale demonstrate The Convincer during a campaign for seat belt use in 1985.

³ While inspecting a Department shooting range near Marshall September 9, 1986, Watson interrupted a robbery and shooting and was himself murdered along with three other men. He is the only Department employee to have been murdered in the line of duty.