

## Sports

### OUTDOORS

# GROUP MERGES RECREATION, LAND USE

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MOKELUMNE HILL - More than a half-century ago, Wayne Long started the free-market environmentalism business, helping landowners to improve their management practices to benefit wildlife. What a concept.

Today, his son, Gordon, 46, is president of Multiple Use Managers, armed with the real-world fact that hunting can subsidize habitat improvements that benefit all sorts of critters, from songbirds and amphibians, to elk and deer.

"People love to talk about non-game species and how to provide for them, but that doesn't pay for habitat improvement," Gordon said. "It's not the real world."

MUM complements traditional land uses - energy production, livestock, timber or farm crops - by incorporating an outdoor recreation program, usually hunting or fishing. The added income to the property owner fuels habitat improvements that allow wildlife to flourish.

Hunting is not excessive but part of a science-based management plan that pays the bills. At the Connolly and Corral Hollow ranches near Tracy, for example, MUM manages 12,000 acres that are home to a free-ranging herd of approximately 120 tule elk. Each year, hunters remove two bulls and one cow elk.

"Hunter fees pay the costs of a five-year management plan that includes development of springs for water, habitat enhancement, brush control and surveys of red-legged frogs and other wildlife," Long said.

Often, the groundwork and water development by MUM is so effective that the state and federal government move in to buy the land and take it over.

"It proves what we can accomplish when the government buys lands that have intrinsic values for wildlife, habitat and open space," Gordon said. "Those actions justify some of our life's work."

Cases in point: Wetlands developed by MUM in western Marin County were purchased for Point Reyes National Seashore. Meiss Lake and adjacent wetlands in Siskiyou County's Butte Valley were purchased to create Butte Valley State Wildlife Area. The 60-square mile Santa Rosa Island was sold to the federal government to be part of Channel Islands National Park.

Locally, MUM has created wetlands that were taken into the Cosumnes River Preserve by the Nature Conservancy, and Stone Lakes in southern Sacramento County was bought up to be the focal point of Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge.

At times, a government takeover has been painful, especially on Santa Rosa Island, where in December 2011, National Parks Service gunners, armed with rifles and shotguns, flew in by helicopter and eradicated herds of Kaibab mule deer and Roosevelt elk that had been established on the island by the landowners - the elk arrived in 1910, the deer in 1929.

"When the island was sold to the park service, we understood that the non-native deer and elk would be wiped out," Long said. "It made me sick to my stomach. We had developed this island as a model for wildlife management. When we first got there the deer and elk were small, with way too many animals for the habitat to support. Thirty-three years later we had promoted trophy animals that were harvested under a management plan to protect the environment and still allow visitors to see these magnificent animals. Now they are gone forever."

Long said MUM is based on biology first, hunting second.

"You've got to have animals and habitat first before the resources flourish," he said. "Wildlife depends on habitat and good forage to be sustainable."

Over the years Long has written private land management plans approved by the Fish and Game Commission and worked with landowners throughout the western states and Alaska. Recently, he began work on a 58,000-acre property in Oregon, developing a management plan that works for the landowner and wildlife.

He enjoys working with the Nature Conservancy, a non-profit that isn't anti-hunting, but realistic and pragmatic when it comes to the benefits of hunting.

At the 37,000-acre Dye Creek Ranch east of Red Bluff, Long works with TNC owners to operate guided turkey and wild pig hunts, and unguided hunting for deer, waterfowl, dove and quail. Hunting revenues help the TNC pay taxes on the land.

At the same time, MUM has worked with educational and archeological programs to study acorns, doves, coyotes, wild pigs and even the ancient Yahi Indians that dwelled in the region.

"It's all because of our multiple use concepts," Long said. "We've proved that hunting is sustainable and compatible, if it is done in a professional, long-term, scientific way. It helps pay the bills and creates a better environment for everything."

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