

(The statements referred to follow:)

STATEMENT OF MELVIN O. STEEN, NEBRASKA STATE LIAISON OFFICER AND
DIRECTOR, GAME AND PARKS COMMISSION

My name is Melvin O. Steen, Nebraska State Liaison Officer and Director of the Game and Parks Commission in that state. I submit this testimony in support of legislation designed to increase and stabilize the funding of the grant-in-aid program authorized by the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965.

In Nebraska, at both state and local levels, we have long recognized an urgent need to provide more healthy recreational outlets for the citizens of our state, and particularly for the young and underprivileged. In the past, we have been unable to mount a program that could meet this social need. Under the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act we have made an excellent start in doing so. An indication of our views on this subject is the action taken by the Nebraska Legislature to implement the program:

1. They have designated the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission as the state agency which shall administer the program in our state, and provided funds for administrative costs.

2. They have appropriated adequate matching funds for all federal money that has been made available.

3. They have provided the funds and authorized the Game and Parks Commission to grant political subdivisions an additional 25% state grant-in-aid for approved projects.

This plan has been very effective in bringing developments at the local level. As of this date, 103 political subdivisions have applied for participation in the program. One hundred local projects are already on file, of which 15 have been completed and 21 are in various stages of progress. We have been unable to initiate the remaining 64 projects for the reason that no federal funds are available. As of February, 1966, we had programmed 28 of the 64 projects by setting aside for this use all the federal funds estimated to become available for this purpose through fiscal year 1970. The remaining 28 projects gather dust in our "hold" files, since there is no funding in sight until fiscal year 1971 and beyond.

Additional projects by political subdivisions are in various stages of planning, but we cannot recommend completion and filing, because no implementation is in sight for five years and more.

At the state level, the situation is just as bad. We presently have projects, totaling more than twenty million dollars, that can be activated as rapidly as funds become available. In addition we have other projects in various stages of planning, to be programmed as circumstances permit.

The truth is that federal funding at the present time is quite inadequate to meet identified needs in Nebraska. Moreover, the proposal to stabilize federal appropriations at \$200 million annually for five years falls far short of our needs. It is our belief that funding should be substantially larger than \$200 million a year, and that this new level should be maintained throughout the life of the program rather than restricted to five years.

Nebraska will always remain an agricultural state, engaged in the very important function of producing food and fiber for the American people and, indeed, the world. Because of this, we shall continue to have the wide open spaces, the clean air, recreational waters, the wildlife, the scenery and other resources that are so important in meeting outdoor recreation needs of our people. This nation is rapidly becoming so urbanized that ability to provide this recreation is sharply limited in the megalopolis regions of America. In this age of high mobility, travel does not present the problem it once did. We believe, therefore, that regions having space for people to play should make a special effort to fulfill the objectives of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act.

The American people have achieved scientific, technological and industrial progress far beyond that reached by any people at any time in all of history. There is little doubt in my mind—and I believe the findings of the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission support this conclusion—that we have fallen dangerously far behind in social progress, and particularly in the preservation and enhancement of man's environment. I submit that the time has come to correct this, not by half-hearted, inadequate means, but by such programming as will enable the American people to make up for neglect in the past, as well as to meet the growing needs of her pyramiding populations, increased and expend-