

This Chief of Engineers Established the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as a Partner in the Conservation Movement

More than a decade before the environmental movement took hold, Lieutenant General Samuel D. Sturgis, Jr., Chief of Engineers from 1953 to 1956, envisioned the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as a partner in the fight for conservation. In a hallmark address to the International Association of Game, Fish, and Conservation Commissioners in September 1953, Sturgis set Corps policy firmly down a path from which it has yet to retreat.

"We must obey the laws of nature and work in harmony with natural forces rather than against them," Sturgis declared in the speech. "Man cannot dominate these forces; but, by working in harmony with them, he can preserve the heritage of future generations." Sturgis traced his own love of nature to his boyhood. All forms of conservation interested him, from soil to wildlife. The destruction of forests filled him with "real pain," and he regretted that in the march "of what we often inaccurately term 'civilization,' some values are likely to be lost."

But General Sturgis believed that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers could help. The Corps could provide shelter for wildlife on coastal and inland waters, for instance. In fact,

Corps projects already furnished "more than 3.5 million acres of land for some form of wildlife management, and recreation." And Sturgis had a vision—namely, to see "resting grounds for migratory game, refuges, managed public hunting, fish culture, game management, research laboratories, field headquarters for wildlife research and administration, arboretums," all aimed at "public use and enjoyment of wildlife resources." Sturgis proclaimed the support of his command toward this cause: "The Corps stands ready and willing to join with each of you and give you every possible assistance that our authorized functions permit to obtain the greatest

practicable benefits for wildlife from our projects."



Lt. Gen. Samuel D. Sturgis, Jr., 1953–56, as Chief of Engineers



Pelicans on Gaillard Disposal Island, Mobile Bay, Ala.