

Boone and Crockett Conservation Law Program

The Boone and Crockett Club have recognized the need for increasing specialization among legal practitioners in the field of science based conservation. As natural resources issues have traditionally been played out in state legislatures and the ballot boxes, we are increasingly seeing the resolution of natural resources issues in the courtroom. In many cases these issues are being litigated by attorneys with no formal training or sensitivity to the complex nature of these issues.

The Boone and Crockett Club in coordination with Michigan State University and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources have proposed, and are in the process of designing a novel conservation law program. The program intends to expose and prepare law students to the fundamental concepts that have governed and guided the conservation movement.

The designers of the conservation law program envision a four part program to achieve competency in these fundamental concepts.

Interdisciplinary Problem Solving: Recognizing the complex and overlapping fields of public policy, law, and the sciences, it is essential that future practitioners in any of these disciplines understand the methodologies of the other disciplines that are essential to solving difficult problems. In that regard, the program will require that students from the sciences and public policy fields come together in a course setting to better understand the way in which these fields work together and independent of one another.

Clinical Immersion: Clinical experiences offer law students an opportunity to immerse themselves in the practice of law. The program will include hiring a Director who will oversee all aspects of the program generally and manage the clinical immersion for program students in particular. This clinical experience will be guided by the assignment of problems and tasks by the MAFWA legal committee.

Externship Experience: In addition to gaining practical experience through the clinical immersion, it is the intention of the program designers to provide an externship experience to program participants. This experience would match students with attorneys with responsibilities for natural resources in state agencies and attorney generals offices. The members of the MAFWA legal committee would be asked to assist in placing students and potentially supervising their workload.

Rigorous Curriculum: The program designers conceive of a rigorous curriculum intending to enhance a well rounded legal education through specialization in conservation law. This curriculum would emphasize topics of particular urgency that confront state agencies: origins of authority for managing wildlife, the North American Model, managing resources across multiple political boundaries.