

North Dakota Wildlife Federation

Flickertales

Winter 2026



Advocating for the conservation of wildlife, habitat, and access for North Dakota's hunters, anglers, and other outdoor users.

North Dakota Wildlife Federation

The North Dakota Wildlife Federation (NDWF) is North Dakota's oldest, largest, and most effective conservation organization. NDWF was founded in 1935 by hunters, anglers, landowners, and other conservationists : who advocated for the conservation of wildlife, habitat, and access for North Dakota's hunters, anglers, and other outdoor users. Our dedicated affiliates, volunteers, and staff maintain this legacy.

Affiliates

Barnes County Wildlife Federation
Beach Firearms & Trap Club
Cass County Wildlife Club
Central Morton Sportsmen's Club
Eddy County Rod & Gun Club
Garrison Wildlife Club
Hannaford Conservation & Wildlife Club
Kindred Wildlife Club
Lewis and Clark Wildlife Club
Missouri Valley Shooting Sports Association
North Dakota Hunters Education Association
North Dakota Houndsmen Association
North Dakota Fur Hunters & Trappers Association
Red River Area Sportsmen's Club
Richland County Wildlife
Stutsman County Wildlife Federation
Tri-County Trap & Wildlife Club

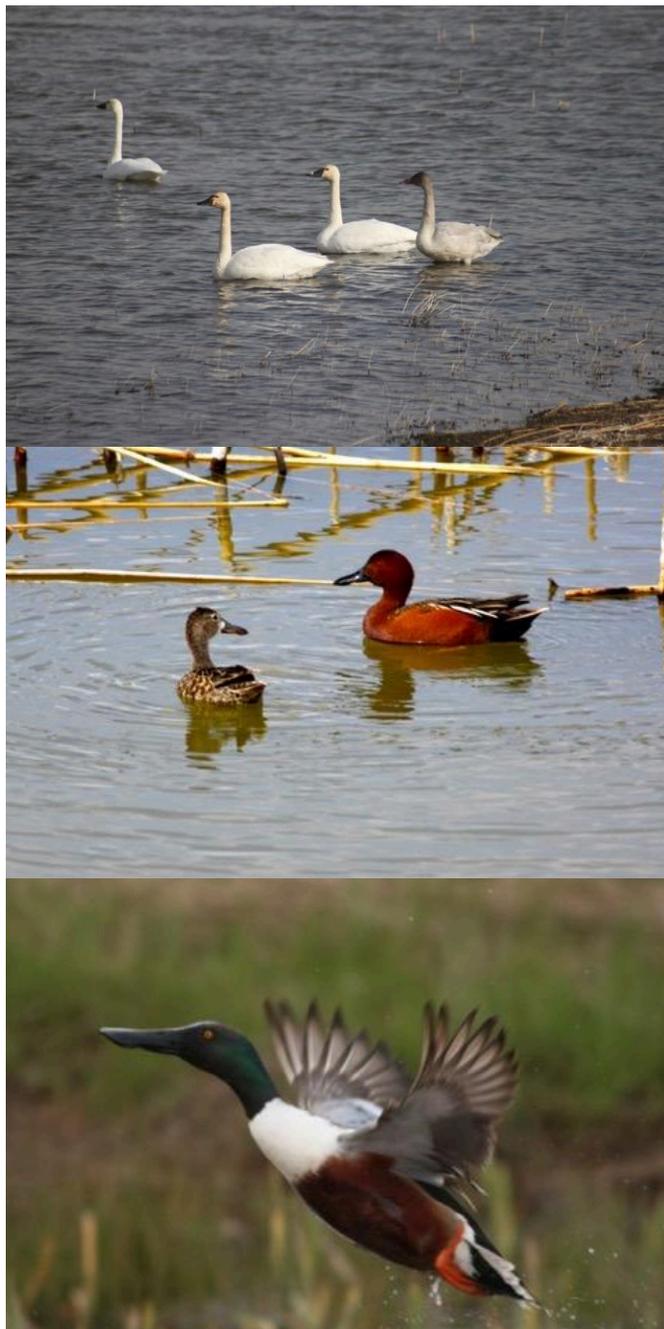
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Kerry Whipp, President, Pingree
Greg Gerou, Vice President, Wahpeton
Derrick Rodgers, Treasurer, Valley City
Courtney Jenner, Secretary, Williston
Dave Brandt, NWF Representative, Buchanan
Dave Dewald, Past President, Bismarck

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Photos: Mike LaLonde, Matt Patrias, Nick Simonson, John Bradley, Spring Bakke



From the Executive Director

The North Dakota Wildlife Federation marks its 91st year at a time of both progress and challenge for conservation in our state. Over the past year, NDWF has remained deeply engaged in wildlife management, access advocacy, R3 efforts, and collaboration with state and national partners. We have stood firm in pushing back against efforts in Congress to sell off our federal public lands, ensuring these places remain in public hands for future generations. In each of these fights, we uphold our responsibility to be the voice of sportsmen and women for wildlife, habitat, and access in North Dakota.

This past year, we expanded both our partnerships and our capacity. We worked alongside tribal partners to advance protections for ancestral lands and waters across North Dakota. Our staff continued to deepen relationships with private landowners and advance grassland conservation across the state. Thanks to a successful North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund grant awarded in 2024, 2025 saw the build-out of our Prescribed Fire Program, and 2026 will bring increased use of prescribed fire on the landscape to restore and sustain North Dakota's prairies.

North Dakota has also launched the North Dakota Governor's Soil Health and Habitat Program, a voluntary, incentive-based initiative that supports producers who adopt practices to improve soil health, enhance wildlife habitat, and strengthen working lands. This program reflects a practical, producer-led approach to conservation and demonstrates that agricultural productivity and habitat stewardship can go hand in hand. NDWF looks forward to supporting its success and ensuring it delivers lasting benefits for wildlife, soil resilience, and rural communities.

NDWF has expanded its staff to meet growing conservation needs. Kali Lee joined the team as Eastern North Dakota Conservation Specialist, strengthening on-the-ground capacity to work with landowners, partners, and affiliates across the region.

Looking ahead to 2026, North Dakota will be in the national spotlight as the conservation world turns its attention here for the opening of the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library on July 4. This moment offers an extraordinary opportunity to showcase our state's conservation heritage and reaffirm the values championed by Theodore Roosevelt: public lands, abundant wildlife, and responsible stewardship.

-John Bradley, Executive Director



Message from Our President

After wrapping up 2025, we ushered in the new year by hosting our 91st Annual Meeting and Banquet in Fargo on January 10th. The year 2026 is set to be memorable, marking both the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States and the formal adoption of the Declaration of Independence in 1776. North Dakota became a state in 1889, 113 years after America's founding as a democratic nation, so this November 2nd, North Dakota will celebrate its 136th birthday. With the grand opening of the Teddy Roosevelt Presidential Library in Medora, North Dakota will take center stage in our country's 250th anniversary festivities—a fitting tribute, given Teddy Roosevelt's stature as one of America's most influential presidents. This celebration is also tinged with irony, as the North Dakota Wildlife Federation and fellow conservation organizations are working tirelessly to uphold Roosevelt's legacy.



The North Dakota Wildlife Federation has been around for more than half of our States' formal existence. What is most amazing about this accomplishment is that we have kept this organization alive by a long lineage of volunteers. Just like all of those that came before us, you and I included, we are all different. We have different upbringings, different careers, different religious views, and different political ideologies. However, given the circumstances, we all share one strong commonality—we enjoy being outdoors and have a goal to protect wildlife, habitat, and access.

In 2025, we experienced unprecedented challenges. We witnessed political discrediting of science for wildlife management, vast termination of federal employees, withholding and eventually cutting of federal agency funding, attempts to close Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center, attempts to sell off public lands, rescinding of the North Dakota BLM management plan, rescinding of the Roadless Rule on US Forest Service Lands, and much more. All these challenges came at us like a runaway locomotive to knock us on our heels. Despite all our differences, we came together and made a valiant effort to stand our ground. We have lost some political challenges, managed to suspend a few for further review, and eliminated a few others from consideration by speaking out and showing up.

2026 is without question going to be even more challenging. One thing I have learned from last year, there is a single word that we must utilize in our arsenal to combat these challenges. That word is "FACTS." I'm not talking about the stuff that comes from social media influencers or unaccredited media outlets. I'm talking about hardcore, undisputable FACTS. We need to hold our politicians, appointed directors of agencies, and without exception, ourselves accountable to the FACTS. If we do that, we have a good chance of getting through 2026 with at least some semblance of a victory.

It's important to reflect on what has sustained the North Dakota Wildlife Federation for more than nine decades. This organization exists because of you. Those who choose to show up, speak up, and lead—often during challenging and uncertain times. The challenges ahead will not be easy, it will require the same kind of courage and leadership that built this Federation in the first place. Now is not the time to step back. Now is the time to lean in, to stay engaged, and to carry this work forward for the next generation. Let's make Teddy Roosevelt proud by promoting and defending the conservation legacy that he bestowed on all of us. - **Kerry Whipp, NDWF President**

ND PLOTS, Habitat Poised for More Gains in '26

By: Nick Simonson



The North Dakota Private Land Open to Sportsmen (PLOTS) program notched another year of significant gains in 2025 despite limited enrollment in major habitat programs such as the federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) on the landscape of the Peace Garden State. With more than 880,000 acres available to hunters last fall, the North Dakota Game & Fish Department's (NDG&F) Private Lands Section had its second consecutive year of adding over 40,000 acres for people to explore in the autumn and is moving quickly toward its goal of having more than 1 million acres in PLOTS, according to Kevin Kading, Private Lands Section Leader.

"2025 was a good year. When you boil it all down, we had about another 40,000 acres enrolled in the program, and that's something we set out about a couple of years ago was to try and hit that 40,000-acre goal every year. So, we've done that for the past two years," he explains, adding, "we ended the year 2025 around 880,000 acres, which was a great, it was a big improvement from where we were at the year before and we're hoping to add another 40,000 acres here in 2026 and keep that going."

In addition to the 40,000 acres opened to public access, Kading details extensive work by Private Lands employees to add another 7,000 acres of new habitat on the landscape as part of the group's efforts in 2025. It's a process that, while streamlined thanks to digital technology and readily-available legal information now online to sort out the various ownership of transitioning farmland in the modern era, is a year-round effort by those agents who connect with, explain to, and ultimately help lay down the details of PLOTS agreements to interested parties along with other supporting programs to maximize the benefits to landowners, wildlife and hunters.

"We'd kind of joke around here that winter used to be the slow time of the year, but it really isn't any more. There's a lot of planning and prep that goes into these agreements, especially when you get into

the agreements that involve new habitat. You're working almost a year ahead of time or longer," Kading explains, "by and large for the most part this time of year, staff are working on two things: renewing existing agreements... [and] the other one is planning for those new agreements that are coming in the door," he concludes.

In addition to PLOTS, the Private Lands Section is exploring two recently opened avenues that sweeten the pot for operators and landowners looking to take marginal lands out of production, open access, improve habitat, and increase soil and water quality on their acres. The first was the inception of the Pheasants Forever (PF) Public Access to Habitat (PATH) program which provides added monetary incentives generated through business donations and other sources, including an Outdoor Heritage Fund grant, given to those landowners who enroll their acres in PLOTS.

Successfully implemented in South Dakota several years ago, the PATH program began in early 2025 as PF coordinated with NDG&F agents enrolling acres in PLOTS to provide added payments on top of those from the agency upon enrollment.

The second such initiative came to be just prior to the turn of the calendar year. The Governor's Legacy Soil Health and Habitat Initiative, arising from an Outdoor Heritage Fund grant in 2025, represents a partnership between North Dakota's Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD), the NDG&F, and various agricultural and ranching groups and conservation organizations focused on removing marginal lands which eat up inputs and expenses for farmers without often producing a profitable crop, and finding habitat programs which idle those lands for a payout, helping with those operators' bottom lines and limiting wasted seed and chemicals while building habitat for pheasants, ducks and deer.

"In short [the Legacy program] is just a five year agreement to put grass on the landscape, and then there's some other benefits for rental payments and cost-share payments and then there's a crop insurance premium reduction that's built into it,"

Kading states, adding that PF's PATH program, "will be rolling out right now, as far as that goes we're putting out information and postcards. That's one of the programs we can layer on top of the PLOTS program, provide some additional incentives for planting grass and developing new habitat, and allowing access. So that's another thing that producers will start hearing about and be seeing in the near future," he concludes.

Through the combination of these initiatives and the continuing work of the Private Lands Section, Kading is hopeful that the division will continue to meet its goal of adding 40,000 acres a year to the PLOTS program along with significant new habitat. Landowners and operators interested in PLOTS and other agency programs can visit the NDG&F Private Lands page at gf.nd.gov/private-lands/landowner-programs; for the Legacy Initiative, log on to: dakotalegacyinitiative.com; and for North Dakota PF's PATH program, visit: pheasantsforever.org/Hunting/PATH-Program-ND.aspx.

Simonson is the lead writer and editor of Dakota Edge Outdoors.



Helping North Dakota farmers strengthen cropland productivity and resilience with perennial grass cover.



Program Administration and Delivery

The program is administered by North Dakota Association of Soil Conservation Districts and North Dakota Game and Fish, with local delivery through Soil Conservation Districts and partners.



Guiding Principles – The LEGACY Framework

- ✓ Land Stewardship
- ✓ Ecology and Energy
- ✓ Growth and Governance
- ✓ Agriculture and Access
- ✓ Conservation and Collaboration
- ✓ Yield and Your Future



Benefits of Perennial Cover

- ✓ Improved Soil Health
- ✓ Water Retention
- ✓ Wildlife Habitat



OPEN TO ALL CROPLAND

Program Details

- 5-year agreement to establish and manage grass.
- Annual rental payment based on the average county rental rate.
- Cost-share for grass seed and seeding - \$50/acre for seed | \$50/acre for establishment.
- \$10 per acre crop insurance premium reduction for every acre of perennial grass established.
- Optional \$15 per acre public access incentive through NDGFD's Private Land Open To Sportsmen program.

Contact Us



North Dakota Association of Soil Conservation Districts

- ✉ lincolnnoakes@lincolnnoakes.com
- 🌐 ndascd.com/district-offices

North Dakota Game and Fish Department

- ✉ privatelands@nd.gov
- 🌐 gf.nd.gov/private-lands/contact

ABCs of a Great Wildlife Club

By: Wayne Beyer, Past President, NDWF

The Red River Area Sportsmen's Club (RRASC) has been one of the premiere wildlife clubs in North Dakota. Their itinerary includes:

- **Archery**, including the National Archery in the Schools Program, air rifle shooting and art (Jr. Duck Stamp Contest) get support.
- **Brunk's** Carp & Sucker Derby reminds young fishermen about the diversity of fish in the Red River. Birdwatching field trips include Tewaukon Refuge and Prairie Wetlands.
- **Canada** Goose Hunt for youths is offered in Minnesota in early September.
- **Dick** Bell Catfish Tournament has been held over Carousel Days, now Blue Goose Days, since its inception. Deer hides and deer carcass disposal sites are offered in November.
- **Education** for conservation is a priority, including Prairie Wetlands Learning Center membership.
- **Fishing** on the Red River and Mooreton Pond is supported by piers and docks.
- **Grants** to Head of the Red and Mooreton Joe Pikarski trap shooting ranges support local shooting sports.
- **High** school trap shooting teams receive grants for practices and tournaments.
- **Ice** Fishing Derby named after Neil Heitkamp is held on Heitkamp Pond in February.
- **Junior** Wildlife Club has had a monthly activity since April, 2002.
- **Kidder** Recreation Area riverside benches and Henry Knight Shelter have been sponsored.
- **Ladies** Pheasant Hunt gets the gals hunting each fall.
- **Marv** Manock Youth Waterfowl Hunt hosts kids hunting ducks and geese on sloughs around Tewaukon Refuge. Minnesota Department of Natural Resources support includes projects like walleye rearing ponds.
- **North** Dakota Game & Fish (NDGF) is a frequent partner, like Advisory Board Meetings and Aquatic Nuisance Species / zebra mussel prevention. North Dakota Wildlife Federation is the voice for North Dakota sportsmen, especially during Legislative sessions. Club members Greg Gerou (Vice President) and Joe Keller (Board Member) are officers.
- **Outdoor** Adventure Foundation helps make outdoor hunting and fishing dreams come true for children and young adults with life-threatening illnesses.
- **Parks** & Recreation receives local funding matches from RRASC for NDGF projects.
- **Queen** bees and pollinators support natural habitat, a priority of the Prairie Pothole Partners, another RRASC membership.
- **Rocky** Mountain Elk Foundation fundraiser includes RRASC sponsorship.
- **Scholarships** are awarded to college students seeking wildlife management degrees. Scouts receive grants for Eagle Scout projects. The Southeast Sportsmen's Club gets all the local wildlife clubs together.

- **Twist** of Fate Deer Hunt offers a quality deer hunt for people who have physical challenges. **TRACKS** conservation magazines are sponsored for every Wahpeton and Breckenridge 4th grade student.
- **U.S.** Fish & Wildlife Service / Tewaukon National Wildlife Refuge projects include the Smith Waterfowl Production Area (WPA) south of Lidgerwood. RRASC was the first known wildlife club to sponsor a WPA.
- **Vince** Herding Youth Fishing Derby gets the fishing season started on the first May Saturday at the Kidder Recreation Area.
- **Wild** Turkey Federation is supported by a sponsorship of the Renegade Toms fund-raiser in Mooreton.
- **X-factor** – RRASC has positively impacted getting many kids outdoors.
- **Youth** Pheasant Hunt gets kids hunting ring-necks on the prairie of Chuck Haus's Hankinson farm.
- **Zoo** support is annually provided for the Chahinkapa Zoo 'Wild Games' fundraiser and other zoo projects.

The Red River Area Sportsmen's Club is a shining example of the ABC's of a great wildlife club.



A Tribute to Dick Bell

By: Wayne Beyer, RRASC

Dick Bell was an outstanding active member of the Red River Area Sportsmen's Club for 25 years, serving as Vice-President and honored as Sportsman of the Year, Lifetime Achievement Award and Lifetime Membership Award. He went beyond paying dues status and showed up at everything.

He was a mentor for many young hunters and fishermen who affectionately called him 'Grandpa.' It all started when the Sportsmen's Club and 4H co-sponsored fishing instruction on Mooreton Pond and he connected with a young boy, teaching him to cast off shore for trout and smallmouth bass. An outdoors role model for his children and grandchildren, Dick started expanding his influence. He was the figure responsible for the Dick Bell Catfish Tournament held during Blue Goose Days so it was named after him.

Dick was recognized as "Sportsman of the Year" by the North Dakota Wildlife Federation and attended annual conferences in Bismarck for many years. The Wahpeton-Breckenridge Chamber of Commerce honored him with the "Extra Mile Award."

Awards aside, his gifts were connecting with people, especially youths experiencing the outdoors. Dick holds a special place in my memories by mentoring daughter Kayla on a spear fishing excursion to Grass Lake near Lidgerwood. His patience, humor and appreciation for little things like observing the underwater world will never be forgotten.

Dick often volunteered for the Junior Wildlife Club. Among his favored times was hunkering in the cattails during the Youth Waterfowl Hunt and teaching girls and boys about duck calling, waiting patiently for the right shooting times and soaking in the early morning experience, appreciating sunrises and connecting with nature.

Over the years Dick struck effective relationships with ND Game and Fish (hunter education teacher), ND Health Department (water quality testing on Mooreton Pond), Boy Scouts (Outdoors Day at Camp Wilderness near Park Rapids, Minnesota), ND Firefighters (another Catfish Tournament), Wyndmere Public Schools (archery program), Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (youth games), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (noxious weed control), Richland County After-School Program (fishing mentor) and North American Hunting Club (lifetime member).

He believed in the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, including science as the proper tool for wildlife policy. Dick consulted with ND Game and Fish wildlife biologists for matters like coyote bounties and was so passionate he was nicknamed "Wile E. Coyote." It was great fun being the "Roadrunner."

Dick was a sharp shooter while growing up in South Dakota, then taught many young people how to accurately shoot rifles, shotguns and BB guns. Dick Bell patiently showed young fishermen how to tie a clinch knot, knead a nightcrawler on a hook, make a spinner and accurately cast to a likely catfish hole near a fallen tree.

During recent years and challenging health, his positive attitude was an inspiration. Self-pity was not in his dictionary. There is no finer outdoors mentor that you would want your child learning from! Dick Bell left his mark on the Dakota outdoors.



Affiliate Club Highlight - Pollinator Garden

David Dewald, President, Lewis and Clark Wildlife Club



The Lewis and Clark Wildlife Club started on their pollinator garden journey back in 2015. We partnered with the Bismarck Parks and Recreation Department (BPRD) through an Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF) grant that BPRD received. The goal was to create a pollinator garden at the newly developed Johnny Gisi Memorial Park in northeast Bismarck. The pollinator garden was named after Bill Bicknell, former Club member and USFWS biologist, who got the ball rolling on the pollinator garden but unfortunately died before he could see it get planted.

The garden is about 9000 sq. ft., not large, but large enough for our Club to plant and maintain. The question always comes up, how big does a pollinator garden need to be to attract butterflies, bees, and

other pollinating insects? As many homeowners know, a pollinator garden doesn't need to be very big at all to attract insects. Even a small, 4ft. by 4 ft., garden can attract numbers of bees and butterflies, especially the common ones.

But what about the rare or uncommon species. To our surprise, the Bill Bicknell Memorial Garden was big enough. A retired UFSWS biologist documented 64 different species. Of which 21 were bees and 12 butterflies and moths. But the most surprising was the documentation of two southern plains bumble bees (*bombus fraternus*). This bumble bee is considered Globally Endangered and has been petitioned for listing as an Endangered Species in the United States. Observations of this species are extremely rare in North Dakota.

So small pollinator gardens can make a difference not only to common insect species but also to rare and endangered species. Thanks to members of the Lewis and Clark Wildlife Club for making the effort to establish the pollinator garden. And a big shout out to Bill Bicknell for having the foresight to get the wheel rolling on this special place.



Certified Wildlife Habitat

By: NDWF Staff



Create a wildlife-friendly landscape or garden space and the National Wildlife Federation will recognize it as a Certified Wildlife Habitat®.

Everyone can enjoy and protect wildlife where they live, learn, work, play, and worship. This program provides simple steps and a wealth of resources to create beautiful spaces that make a big impact for local and migratory species from small window boxes to vast habitat corridors. Implementing climate smart sustainable gardening practices benefits people and communities across North America.

Explore options below for the ways you or your organization can be part of the movement to increase even more wildlife-friendly acres across backyards, public gardens, school districts, corporate campuses, colleges and universities, places of worship, and community spaces across the country and at select sites across the world. All these efforts incorporate **Habitat Essentials** with **native plants**.

Learn how anyone, at any age, in any place, can help and receive recognition for their efforts through a few different certification options. Check out the list of benefits individuals receive when they certify at www.nwf.org/Native-Plant-Habitats/Create-and-Certify



Kansas
Wildlife
Federation

MILKWEED FOR MONARCHS

A community science
project supporting monarch
conservation



BE A COMMUNITY SCIENTIST

- 🌱 Receive native common milkweed seeds by mail.
- 🦋 Plant and care for milkweed at your site
- 📊 Share simple observations on sprouting, growth, and monarch
- 🔍 Help compare seed preparation methods to improve conservation outcomes.
- 💛 Contribute to a growing regional research effort

GOOD FOR YOUR IF:

- Have space for 15-24 milkweed plants
- Are curious, observant, and willing to follow simple instructions
- Want to make a real impact for monarchs and pollinators

Enrollmen due by end of March
and planting data reporting
comittment April through Sept.

FOR MORE ABOUT THE PROJECT



[KWF Milkweed for Monarch Webpage](#)

➔ [SIGN UP TO BE A
COMMUNITY SCIENTIST](#)

Hosted by the Kansas Wildlife Federation - Open to participants
where common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) is native.



P.O. Box 1442, Bismarck, N.D. 58502



P.O. Box 1091, Bismarck, N. D. 58502

Conservation Notes

Waste, Fraud, and Abuse

Issue #125, January 2026

The current federal administration has identified “waste, fraud, and abuse” as serious problems within the government. However, fraud and abuse are criminal activities. To prevent or reduce fraud and abuse, the perpetrators need to be identified and punished for their illegal actions. Firing random employees and defunding agencies charged with administering federal programs does not stop fraud and abuse. In practice, that only reduces the agency’s ability to stop and prevent fraud and abuse.

Federal agencies such as the US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and US Army Corps of Engineers need to be funded and staffed to be able to manage federal lands and administer Congressionally approved programs adequately. Slashing administrative, land management, and enforcement staff does not increase efficiency, reduce fraud and abuse, or prevent waste. It just increases the problem and reduces the capacity to correct it. Therefore, federal agencies should be given the funds and staffing to search out and prosecute these criminal acts.

For more information on this message or other conservation topics, contact: John Bradley, Executive Director, North Dakota Wildlife Federation, (jbradley.ndwf@gmail.com), Mike McEnroe, Past President, North Dakota Wildlife Federation(mcmcenroe@midco.net) or Rick Nelson, Past President, North Dakota Chapter, The Wildlife Society, (bluebill@bis.midco.net). For a complete list of Conservation Notes visit (ndctws.org)-library

Events

NDWF and our affiliates host educational and social events throughout the year. Check out our Facebook events page for details. Visit www.northdakotawildlife.org for upcoming board meetings information.

April 11th – NDWF Big Spenders hosted by Barnes County Wildlife - Eagles Club, Valley City, ND

Make an Impact

For 90 years, the North Dakota Wildlife Federation has depended on donations from conservationists like you to support our work to protect North Dakota's abundant wildlife, our natural lands and waters, and our unmatched public access to the outdoors for future generations to enjoy. We are able to do so much to protect North Dakota's outdoor heritage because people like you decide to support our work. Your financial support is crucial to our ability to stand up to well-funded special interest groups at the North Dakota Capitol and in Congress. We need everyone who values North Dakota's outdoor heritage to get involved.



NDWF Membership Form

Individual Membership: \$15 - Associate/Business Membership: \$25 - Educational Organization: Free

Name _____
Address _____
Email _____
Phone _____

Make Checks Payable To:

North Dakota Wildlife Federation
PO Box 1091
Bismarck, ND 58502-1091