

# North Dakota Wildlife Federation

## *Flickertales*

*Spring 2025*



*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

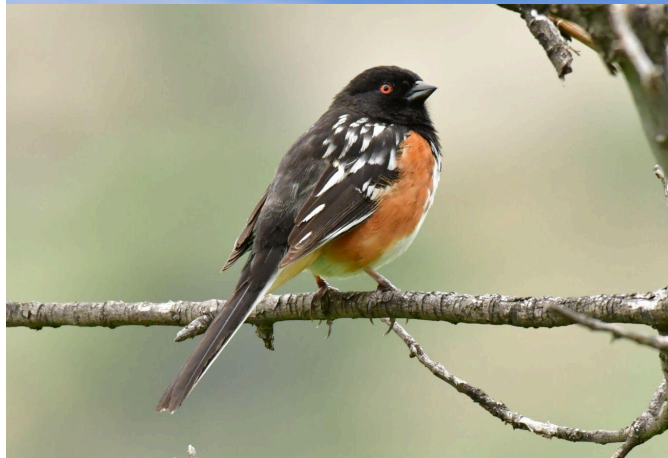
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Photos: Mike LaLonde, Matt Patrias, Nick Simonson, John Bradley, Spring Bakke



## *From the Executive Director*

*It can be hard to read the news these days. Each morning it feels like a bad game of whack-a-mole, but despite the growing number of attacks on public lands, environmental safeguards, and bedrock federal conservation programs coming out of Congress and the White House, I remain more hopeful than ever for the Federation.*

*Why?*

*Because conservation is one of the few issues that still has the power to bring people together. Whether you hunt, fish, hike, ranch, or simply love this land we call home — conservation connects us. It cuts across party lines, rural and urban divides, and generations. It's rooted in a shared value: the responsibility to leave our land, water, and wildlife better than we found it.*



*Here in North Dakota, we have a proud tradition of stewardship. And while national politics may feel increasingly fractured, I've seen firsthand how conservationists—when united—can drive real, lasting impact on the ground. From restoring native grasslands to expanding access to public hunting and fishing, our work matters. It is tangible. And it is possible because people like you continue to stand up and show up.*

*Now is not the time to get discouraged. It's time to get louder, dig deeper, and build broader coalitions that reflect the power and diversity of the outdoor community. Together, we can—and will—protect the places we love and the future we believe in.*

*Let's keep going. North Dakota's wild places are worth it.*

*In solidarity,*

**John Bradley**

*Executive Director*



# Message from Our President

## Fire Hose of Chaos to Keep You Distracted

When I'm fortunate enough to get a spring turkey tag in the annual lottery, it's always my preference to hunt North Dakota's National Grasslands. Regrettably, my 2025 spring turkey season was over quickly this year. I had planned on a long four-day weekend hunting, but my OnX pre-scouting was better than I anticipated. I arrived at my campsite midday and planned to use the afternoon to physically scout my chosen hunting spot. I parked on a rise that gave me an unobstructed view of the buttes and valleys below. The road dust hadn't even settled before I glassed a single tom strutting behind seven hens. The hens were scratching and foraging in the dry grass, just along a wooded ravine. The tom was strutting about twenty yards behind, staying close to the tree cover. Using the terrain, I was able to strategize my approach.



It seemed too easy, and certainly uneventful since I had just arrived. I can assure you things didn't go exactly as planned, there was bovine intervention in this comedy, but I'll save that story for another time. For now, I want to draw your attention to the public land I was hunting because it needs our full and immediate attention.

A "fire hose of chaos" is a phrase used to describe the current United States Government administration. Regardless of what media outlet you follow, the news coming from Washington D.C. has certainly been chaotic and relentless. For someone like me that follows politics, to my detriment, keeping up has been exhausting. Mainstream media has focused most of their attention on immigration and tariffs. But what hasn't received much coverage is that our public lands are in serious trouble. My own opinion is that Washington is flooding the media with chaos by design, to distract from what is being planned behind the scenes. If they are allowed to follow through with these plans, the consequences will be devastating and irreversible. There is more than I can cover in this writing, so here is a quick summary. I'll start from the top.

Budget Reconciliation Bill (The Big Beautiful Bill) – The Trump Administration has prioritized significant changes, including the elimination of federal agencies, the termination of federal employees, and substantial budget cuts to remaining operations. Despite these efforts, Congress has recognized that these initial cost reductions have barely impacted federal spending and have fallen short of their projected savings. Consequently, Congress is now considering the liquidation of public lands in their reconciliation bill draft. This proposal has raised considerable concern, prompting Senator Daines (R-MT), Sheehy (R-MT), and Representative Zinke (R-MT) to draft an emergency amendment to prohibit the sale of public lands. Unfortunately, the amendment failed with a vote of 48-51. Our Senators, John Hoeven and Kevin Cramer,

voted against the amendment and later expressed their support for selling certain public lands, though they did not specify which lands. President Trump is pushing for the Budget Reconciliation Bill to be passed by Congress and signed into law by July 4th.

U.S. Department of the Interior Strategic Plan (FY 2026-2030) – Doug Burgum was appointed Secretary of the Interior. During his confirmation hearing, he was clear what his intentions were regarding our public lands when he said, “as a businessman, I see our public lands as an asset on a balance sheet that are being underutilized.” A lot of consequential impacts to our public resources have happened under his first 100 days, but more recently in the DOI Strategic Plan he outlined four goals, the top priority being coal, oil, and gas production on public lands. He talks about liquidating and exchanging public lands for economic development, future growth, and prosperity. He also describes the intention of making public lands more accessible for recreation and enjoyment, such as building roads, removing restrictions for recreational vehicles, and opening restricted areas (National Wildlife Refuges and Wildlife Protection Areas) for hunting and fishing. The idea of creating more hunting opportunities sounds fantastic on the surface, but the means for which he wants to get there would have dire consequences for the resource. One of the most alarming of Burgum’s proposals is the creation of a digital reservation system for public land access and permitting. Sounds to me like he aims to establish a reservation system for hunting and access leases on public lands. The full document is very alarming.

North Dakota Trust Land’s Completion Act – This legislation was originally proposed by John Hoeven and Kelly Armstrong back in 2023 but was shuffled to the back of the filing cabinet from lack of action by Congress. Representative Julie Fedorchak, Senators Hoeven and Cramer have brought it back to the forefront. In short, this bill would allow the State of North Dakota to forfeit State School Lands that occupy acres within Tribal boundaries. In exchange, the State of North Dakota would confiscate federal lands (BLM) in western North Dakota as compensation. If this legislation passes, not only does it remove public acres from public access, but it changes the management plan for these acres. As more private acres get posted for trespass, losing public acres to the State School Lands program will further reduce public hunting access.

Landowner Easement Rights Act – This legislation was introduced by Representative Julie Fedorchak along with Representative Hageman (R-WY). The intent of this Act would prohibit the Department of Interior (DOI) from entering new conservation easements exceeding 30 years and allow landowners to renegotiate terms or buy back acres enrolled in conservation easements. This not only applies to new easement agreements, but also to pre-existing easements that were signed into perpetuity. This Act would have significant consequences not only to water quality and habitat management, but considering North Dakota is the duck capital of the world, the impact to waterfowl habitat and populations would be devastating. Even under current conditions there have been significant reductions in waterfowl populations. Non-game species like songbirds have seen a massive decline. So much so that certain species could be considered threatened. This is all associated with habitat loss, and considering the amount of commercial agriculture and wetland drainage that is expanding each year, we can’t afford to lose habitat acres that have already been bought and paid for. Another consideration regarding this legislation – the funds generated from the federal duck stamp were used to purchase these conservation easements. Hunters, bird watchers, and stamp collectors purchased and invested their hard-earned dollars into this program. If this passes, Congress will be allowed to cash in on your investment.

Our public lands and wildlife are facing unprecedented threats, reminiscent of the challenges documented in history books. What we see today is all that remains from the era of Manifest Destiny, when buffalo, waterfowl,

and other wildlife were decimated for commercial gain. Visionary leaders like Teddy Roosevelt had the foresight and courage to challenge mainstream ideals. They understood the delicate balance needed between commercialization and the preservation of our natural resources. These resources are finite and must be protected for the future and for generations to come. Most of the wildlife and hunting organizations we belong to were founded by individuals who shared this perspective. We urgently need to follow in their footsteps. If we fail, it will be our responsibility to explain why we allowed it to happen.

- Kerry Whipp, NDWF President





## ANS Awareness Week: May 4-10

By: Nick Simonson



As spring conditions warm and boaters take to the water with more regularity, the North Dakota Game & Fish Department (NDG&F) reminds all watercraft users to clean, drain and dry their boats and jetskis as they depart their favorite lakes as part of the agency's annual Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) Awareness Week, running from May 4 to May 10. According to NDG&F ANS Coordinator Ben Holen, the seven-day stretch, positioned at the start of the openwater fishing season, helps provide information on invasive species to those hitting the water as the spring warms, and instills best practices that should stick with them until fall.

"ANS Awareness week is here May 4 through May 10. At which time many partners, including NDG&F, ND Water Resources, ND Ag Department and many NGOs (non-government organizations) will be posting ANS Awareness Week materials out there.

And the goal of that week is to reach the wide variety of different water users out there on the landscape, because we all play a role in protecting our waters from ANS," Holen states, adding that a simple mantra helps limit the spread, year after year, "Clean. Drain. Dry.' is obviously incredibly easy and extremely effective, and that's why it's preached by every state out there. If you're looking at the hull of your boat, you want to remove or clean off vegetation, mussels, or anything like that, removing it from your watercraft."

Currently more than a dozen waters in North Dakota have ANS in them, with the most notable species being zebra mussels, a small invasive bivalve mollusk noted for multiplying rapidly and altering aquatic ecosystems almost as fast. Currently nine waters in the Peace Garden State are impacted by zebra mussels, with the South Dakota portion of Lake Oahe having an established population as well. Through the zebra mussel's ability to filter up to a liter of lake water per day, a growing population can remove important nutrients and microorganisms which form the base of the food chain in many waters, impacting the growth of baitfish and game fish further up the food chain as the water becomes less fertile. Additionally, increased water clarity can often lead to more challenging fishing and more vegetation growing in deeper strata of a water body, altering angling opportunities from what they were just a few years earlier, prior to the zebra mussels' arrival.

"Draining is a critical factor in that with zebra mussel veligers (the species' larvae, which can be as small as 22 microns) at those infested water bodies, can range all the way up to 100 veligers per liter. So, it's incredibly important that you're draining to the full capacity. We always want to make sure we're draining livewells, ballast tanks, lowering motors, and draining watercraft to the fullest extent they can be," Holen explains, adding that a week of drying time kills any other trace of ANS which may remain, "in the summertime we recommend a seven-day dry period. So, if you recreate on a Saturday, the next Saturday you should be ready to go as far as the dry period. That sun, and UV light, and all that water temperature is incredibly hard on zebra mussels, aquatic vegetation and anything else that might be in that water."

The first line of defense in preventing the spread of ANS in North Dakota's lakes rests with recreational water users themselves, and that is the focus of ANS Awareness week. The second line of defense is the strategic deployment of seasonal boat launch surveyors trained by the NDG&F to help boaters inspect their watercraft when launching and loading at various high-traffic boat launches on popular waters in the state, and on those lakes and rivers where ANS have been detected.

"We operate what's called a roving watercraft inspection system here in North Dakota," states Holen, "and those inspectors basically operate at peak hours of boating traffic, so they'll get on the water, interact with those boaters and we try to allocate those inspectors' time based on risk, so they're actively educating boaters out there at high priority locations, instructing them about ANS and how to prevent the spread," he concludes.

More information waters affected by ANS in North Dakota can be found at [gf.nd.gov/ans](http://gf.nd.gov/ans), where maps help point out impacted lakes and rivers, and instructions can be reviewed for effectively cleaning, draining and drying a boat to kill any unwanted hitchhikers which could negatively impact other waters if introduced.

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



# CWD Management in North Dakota post SB 2137 - What's Next?

*By: NDWF Staff*



Chronic wasting disease (CWD) poses a long-term threat to North Dakota's big game populations, with serious implications for the future of hunting in the state. This fatal neurological disease, which affects deer and other cervids, undermines herd health, reduces the number of mature animals available for harvest, and increases annual death loss. Despite the proven risks, recent legislative decisions have complicated the state's efforts to manage the spread of CWD.

CWD was first confirmed in North Dakota's mule deer in 2009 and in white-tailed deer by 2013. As of September 2022, the disease has been detected in eight deer gun units across the state. These expanding hotspots are prompting growing concern among wildlife experts and conservationists. The North Dakota Game and Fish Department, the state agency responsible for

protecting wildlife for sustainable use, has taken the disease seriously from the outset. Their approach to CWD management is rooted in science and focused on containment, monitoring, and education.

One of the most contentious management tools amongst hunters is the restriction of baiting. The practice of baiting artificially congregates deer, increasing the risk of disease transmission through contaminated saliva, feces, or contact with infected carcasses. Scientific evidence supports that baiting accelerates the spread of CWD by intensifying deer-to-deer interactions and exposure to infected environments. To reduce these risks, the Game and Fish Department had previously restricted baiting within 25 miles of a known CWD detection.

However, recent actions by the North Dakota Legislature rolled back these baiting restrictions, sparking concern from wildlife professionals. While baiting remains prohibited on public land, the statewide rollback may limit the Department's ability to contain the disease's spread into new areas. Experts caution that undermining science-based strategies could have long-term consequences for both herd health and hunting opportunities.

Surveillance remains a cornerstone of CWD management. Previously, CWD-negative areas were tested every three years, though sample sizes were often too small to yield reliable data. CWD-positive zones, on the other hand, were tested annually, generating more data than needed for year-to-year comparisons. Moving forward,

the Department plans to test all units less frequently but with greater intensity, allowing for a clearer, more accurate picture of CWD distribution and prevalence.

Carcass disposal also plays a key role in managing CWD. The brain and spinal cord of infected animals contain high concentrations of the disease-causing prions. When left on the landscape, these tissues can serve as a source of infection for years. Hunters are now required to dispose of unused carcass parts in landfills to limit contamination and disease transmission.

Despite the setbacks in baiting policy, hunting remains one of the most effective tool in reducing CWD's impact. Strategic harvests in high-prevalence areas help remove potentially infected animals and slow the spread. The Department is using prevalence thresholds—first detection, 5%, and 10%—to guide license allocation and land access decisions.

Ultimately, North Dakota's fight against CWD depends on cooperation from hunters, landowners, and policymakers. The Game and Fish Department remains committed to a transparent, evidence-based approach, emphasizing education and outreach to build support for effective, science-driven solutions.





# Gardening For Pollinators

NWF Staff



Gardeners across the country are searching for flowers to make their gardens pop! While there are lots of considerations when it comes to choosing plants, one big one is **whether they are native to your region!**

[Native plants](#) are essential to support local wildlife like butterflies, bees, birds, and more. Check out some of our favorite native flowers for beginner and expert wildlife gardeners alike. Adding even just one or two of these native species into your garden could go far in [supporting wildlife!](#)

## Milkweed



**Botanical Name:** *Asclepias* spp. **Bloom time:** Summer

**Native Range:** Various native species across the continental United States. [Find milkweed species native to your state here.](#)

**What makes it great:** Milkweed is an amazing choice for your garden because it is the only host plant for [monarch caterpillars](#). With recent numbers showing that monarch butterflies are continuing to decline, planting milkweed is more important than ever!

These gorgeous plants often have pink or orange blooms that attract all kinds of pollinators like bees and butterflies.

Just be sure to select milkweed [species that are native to you](#) and [avoid tropical milkweed](#) which is not native to the United States.

[Purchase native milkweed online here!](#) This link will redirect to a third party site.

## Goldenrod



**Botanical Name:** *Solidago* spp. **Bloom Time:** Summer-Fall

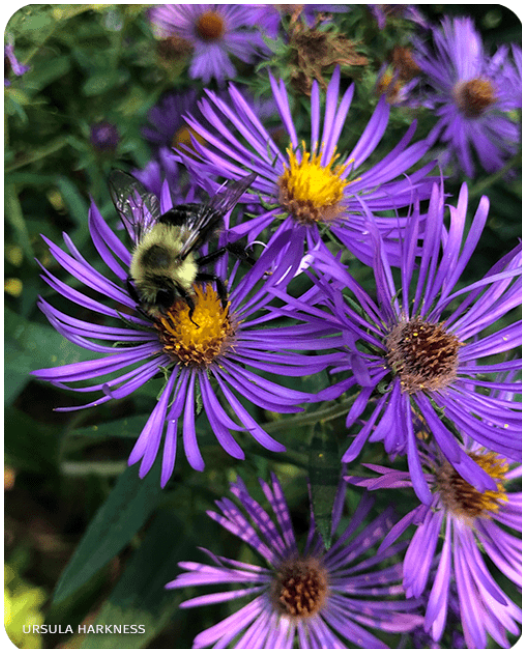
**Native Range:** Various native species across the continental United States. [Find goldenrod species native to your zip code here.](#)

**What makes it great:** Not only do goldenrods light up your garden with their bright yellow blooms, but they are a keystone plant! This means that they support a huge number of wildlife species like butterflies and bees that depend on them. There are many native species of goldenrod that can make a great addition to your garden.

Many gardeners are under the impression that goldenrod is the source of their fall allergies, but we're here to debunk this plant myth! The fall allergies that many people suffer from are often caused by ragweed, a wind pollinated flower that blooms at the same time as goldenrod. Since goldenrods are pollinated by bees and other pollinators, it is unlikely to put a bunch of pollen in their air that would make you sneeze. [Learn more about this allergy myth here!](#)

[Purchase native goldenrod online here!](#) This link will redirect to a third party site.

## Asters



**Botanical Name:** *Aster* spp. **Bloom Time:** Summer-Fall

**Native Range:** Various native species across the continental United States. [Find aster species native to your zip code here.](#)

**What makes it great:** Are you a fan of striking blue, purple, and white blooms in your garden? Asters are an amazing way to add these gorgeous colors and a lot of texture to your garden. Plus, they can be a great source of blooms in the fall when a lot of other plants have finished flowering.

These beautiful native species aren't just pretty for humans, they are a great source of nectar and pollen for many pollinators. Plus, they are even host plants for many caterpillars!



[Purchase native asters online here!](#) This link will redirect to a third party site.

## Frogfruit



**Botanical Name:** *Phyla nodiflora* **Bloom Time:** Late Spring-Fall

**Native Range:** Much of the southern United States. [Find out if it is native to you here!](#)

**What makes it great:** One of the biggest questions we get from gardeners looking to incorporate more native plants is: “Are there native plants that can serve as a ground cover?” The answer is, of course, yes! Frogfruit is one great option for a native ground cover.

Not only is this plant low maintenance and drought tolerant, but it is a great choice for wildlife! Its blooms will attract pollinators, and it serves as a host plant to many caterpillars including the white peacock butterfly larva.

[Purchase native frogfruit online here!](#) This link will redirect to a third party site.

## Cardinal Flower



**Botanical Name:** *Lobelia cardinalis* **Bloom Time:** Summer-Fall

**Native Range:** Much of the Eastern and Southwestern United States. [Find out if it is native to you here!](#)

**What makes it great:** Are you a fan of hummingbirds? Then the cardinal flower may be a perfect fit for your garden. This gorgeous native species has showy red blooms that provide an amazing nectar source for hummingbirds during their migration period. Many gardeners enjoy watching the hummingbirds come and visit these striking flowers.

[Purchase native cardinal flower online here!](#) This link will redirect to a third party site.

# Handful of Hints for Spring Crappies



One of spring's first fish that anglers find schooling up in the shallows, rushing reed beds and staking out structure for spawning is the crappie. Whether black or white, these fish are synonymous with fast spring fishing and knowing what to use for them can help heat up any chilly day. From small jigs and plastics to those lures that flash and flicker, this handful of baits will get things going in the right direction.

1. Start Small. Insert heads with a variety of crappie tubes help present a package that is compact and moves naturally, as the lead is spread out over the hookshank allowing for a more horizontal descent. In weights from 1/32- to 1/16-ounce, these tiny offerings should be fished on light line to allow them the most natural presentation. Vary the tube colors to find the pattern that is working or the hues that draw the most strikes and use these lighter options up in the shallows when fish are staging in their spawning areas.

2. Fantastic Plastic. Small ballhead jigs are also easily dressed with the growing array of crappie plastics on tackle shop shelves. From classic curly-tailed grubs and small shad bodies, to marabou-tailed plastics and miniature creature baits for panfish, a wide selection of soft baits are now available for crappie anglers. In an array of styles and colors, the combinations are nearly limitless, and the options will provide a variety of ways to catch fish. Fished lightly, these plastics can go shallow for staging fish as well.

3. Blades of Glory. Jigging options such as the Road Runner, with its built-in trail-behind blade and the Beetle Spin, with its angled arm and small spinner blade are both excellent search lures for crappies staging for the spawn. The flickering blades give off the flash of a minnow or other baitfish and provide added motion to the plastic on the jig. A handful of these lures will provide extra excitement in the water when fish are aggressive and can be worked quickly to eliminate non-productive stretches when fish are staging for spring or setting up into summer patterns.

4. Get Dressed. While certainly more set than the interchangeable options discussed above, marabou jigs and those dressed with krystal flash, hackle and other materials are inexpensive offerings that



don't need to be reset with every cast. Coming as small as 1/64-ounce, dressed jigs combine colors and materials to match what the fish want in a water, and provide something subtle when fish are fussy.

5. Crank It. Crankbaits like the Rapala Countdown in the smallest sizes are easily cast and timed down into a strike zone before being retrieved. Trollable cranks for covering favorite crappie waters are also available, and models like the Crappie Maxx from Bass Pro Shops can be run through the water column for suspended specks. Adding a few hard baits to standard offerings provides a deep fishing option when fish are schooled up around structure and make for a well-rounded tacklebox ready for anything this spring and summer.

Simple and effective crappie offerings won't break the bank and are fun to assemble for the upcoming season. Use forage cues and the physical features of crappies – their big eyes and large, vacuuming mouth – to offer items up that appear natural and are easily inhaled. Upsize those offerings on lakes where bigger fish are looking for something larger to eat. With these baits ready to roll, the upcoming spring crappie fishing will be hot...in our outdoors.

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

# *Don't Sell Out Public Lands, Our Sporting Traditions or Our Way of Life*

By: Aaron Kindle, National Wildlife Federation Director of Sporting Advocacy



Last year, my family was lucky enough to visit our son, who was taking a gap year in Argentina. The landscapes there are magnificent and we took full advantage of every moment to explore them. But I was surprised to learn that 96% of the land in Argentina is privately owned – mostly by large corporations. As a result, many Argentines never get to experience the natural wonders that are everywhere in Argentina.

The trip was an important reminder about how fortunate we are in the United States to have vast public lands where people from all walks of life are welcome to connect with nature and engage in countless outdoor recreation opportunities with their family and friends.



As an avid hunter and angler, I — and thousands of people like me — depend on federal lands to provide wildlife habitat and access to places to hunt and fish. America's public lands also sustain our economy and hundreds of small towns by supporting an outdoor industry that generates more than \$1 trillion annually and supports more than 7.6 million jobs.

Unfortunately, there are now some proposals in Congress to try to sell off these public lands to balance the budget. This foolhardy idea could effectively put an end to a unique heritage that is the product of more than a century of leadership by both Republicans and Democrats.

What's particularly galling is that this proposal is being put forth as a way to save money, when in reality, selling off public lands has tremendous costs — for wildlife, for hunters and anglers, for ranchers, and for rural communities. Our public lands are economically productive, fueling local economies, and putting money in federal coffers— whether it's from grazing fees, hunting licenses, tourism revenue, or oil and gas royalties. Our public lands represent smart investment, not government bloat. Any money gained from a quick sell-off is short-sighted and the costs of stewarding those lands just get transferred to local governments that are ill-equipped to pay for firefighting and infrastructure costs.

Some in Congress also have been talking about selling public lands to solve the affordable housing crisis in this country. Don't get me wrong— the lack of affordable housing is a very real problem. But there currently are reasonable avenues for Congress and the administration to address those needs without selling off lands that future generations will never get back.

Affordable housing only works when costs are kept down- and land prices are one of the biggest costs. If the government sells public land at market rate, developers will pass that cost to buyers. If the federal government gives the land away, taxpayers foot the bill. Either way, using public lands for housing is not a simple solution, and in many instances is not fiscally practical. Plus, these new developments will require roads, water, infrastructure, fire service and police— all paid for by taxpayers and often at a very high cost because these lands aren't always close to already existing infrastructure.

Fortunately, there *are* some members of Congress that recognize the tremendous value of public lands to the American people, and that selling off public lands is not a viable solution to balancing the budget or solving the housing crisis. In particular, Rep. Ryan Zinke of Montana and Rep. Gabe Vasquez of New Mexico have introduced the “[Public Lands in Public Hands Act](#)” that bans the sale or transfer of most public lands. And several other influential lawmakers have voiced their strong support of the bill, including Sen. Steve Daines, Sen. Tim Sheehy, and Rep. Troy Downing of Montana and Rep. Mike Simpson in Idaho. But we need more members to stand up for public lands to keep them off the chopping block.

Our public lands are where we hike, camp, hunt, fish and hike. It's where we teach our kids about wildlife and about outdoor values. Please [join me in urging Congress](#) to keep public lands in public hands so that future generations will be able to enjoy the many benefits that public lands provide all of us.

# Rangeland Improvement & Habitat (Dunn & McKenzie Counties)

By: Cara Greger



North Dakota Wildlife Federation (NDWF) has funding to work on rangeland improvement/habitat improvement work. The funding is dedicated to doing this work in Dunn and McKenzie counties in North Dakota. We are looking to partner with landowners and organizations to make improvements to rangeland and wildlife habitat.

Our goal is to enhance the ecological balance and productivity of rangelands while supporting the natural habitats of wildlife species. By implementing rangeland improvement practices, we aim to increase biodiversity, improve soil health, and create sustainable grazing systems for livestock. Collaborating with landowners is crucial to achieving these goals, ensuring that

the improvements made are beneficial to both the environment and agricultural operations.

## **What's good for the Herd is good for the Bird!**

Building relationships with land managers, ranchers, and farmers is the first step in any project to improve habitat for livestock and wildlife. All North Dakotans see the benefits to sustainable land management practices. Starting with healthy soils that stay in place and grow productive plants, insects, and diverse animal populations not only benefit hunters and anglers but also land managers. The more diverse the soil and plant community, the better equipped that land is to tolerate disturbance such as wildfire, drought, floods and other disasters. When talking to landowners, we all see this, so we start with what we agree on and go from there. What improvements will benefit their management? Then suggestions can be made on how to achieve those goals together. The more information shared the better the plan will be.

NDWF works with conservation partners on private lands projects. When there is an interested landowner or if the landowner is located outside of our priority area, there are other resources where operators can be referred. The Meadowlark Initiative and the Dakota Legacy Initiative are places



where partners have information for landowners to find help to improve their agricultural operation. Both have staff, websites and resources to help search for the best practices for land management. If you are looking at cover crops, grass plantings, fencing, water development, wetland improvements or any conservation land management practice that helps the bottom line and wildlife these entities have answers.

### **Grazing structure and private land improvement projects in Dunn and McKenzie**

NDWF has special funds to work with landowners and managers on private lands and allotments in Dunn and McKenzie County. The NDWF program agrees to issue payments to individuals or organizations within 60 days after receiving receipts for the grazing infrastructure improvement projects or habitat improvement projects.

Some examples are the elimination of woven wire fencing or other non-wildlife friendly fencing and installation of wildlife friendly fencing. NDWF will reimburse up to 60% of the actual cost for wildlife friendly fencing installation. Landowners will contact NDWF before each phase of fencing to take place to ensure funds are available.

For the agreement, NDWF needs the operator's name and contact information. If the landowner is different from the operator, NDWF needs the landowner contact information.

Other questions to answer for the project are:

1. What wildlife do they observe on land? Has there ever been an issue with the fence and wildlife?
2. What type of hunting do they allow on their land? Are they in PLOTs? Any special hunts allowed on their land?
3. Are they willing to put in wildlife friendly fencing according to the Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks standards? Send over email. 3 or 4 strand. Bottom strand smooth wire and 16-18 inches off ground. No taller than 40-42 inches for top wire.
4. How will this fencing project improve your operation? Are any other pasture infrastructures needed to make utilization of the pasture more efficient and better for plant community and operation? Is the rest and recovery of the vegetation improved by this improvement?
5. What type of livestock operation do you run?

Other infrastructure improvement projects could be water development, grassland plantings, pollinator plantings, wildlife friendly shrub/ tree plantings where appropriate, and other activities.

### **Juniper Encroachment and Prescribed Fire support**

NDWF partners with ND Natural Resource Trust, National Wild Turkey Federation, Northern Great Plains Joint Venture, Mule Deer Foundation, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and Outdoor Heritage Funds (OHF) from ND Industrial Commission to work with ranchers to control Rocky Mountain juniper on their rangelands. This program is in Billings, Golden Valley, Slope, Dunn

and McKenzie counties. The program helps with costs to control juniper by using chainsaws, equipment with shears or masticating head or paying a private contractor to do the work. Historically, Rocky Mountain juniper was located on north facing, rocky slopes in the Badlands of ND. With the lack of periodic fires and pressures of large herbivores, climatic changes, and other reasons, the juniper have been able to thrive in traditional grassy areas. This causes increased uncontrollable wildfire risks, loss of forage, loss of easy travel in areas of the pasture, and reduction in moisture for other plants and groundwater recharge.

With the funding partners and NRCS signing up ranchers for Practice 314, NDWF helps educate and make it fiscally possible to control Rocky Mountain juniper before it is too cost prohibitive.

Because of the work with juniper removal projects, the need for prescribed burning came up in many conversations. This prompted NDWF to look into funding support for prescribed burning and education. NDWF partnered with Pheasants Forever to apply for an OHF grant and received an award to work on this for the next 5 years to help livestock operators receive training and work with contractors, Volunteer Fire Departments (VFD), and neighbors to implement fire management on their lands.

### **The Future**

The Future of wildlife habitat; hunting, fishing and recreational access; soil health; and rangeland health are important topics to discuss. NDWF is looking for partners in keeping North Dakota a success story in land management. We want to work with ranchers, farmers, businesses, hunters, anglers, wildlife enthusiasts, and all the partners to create the legendary experience that North Dakota has given and will continue to give. Contact us today to start a conversation on how we can keep this legacy strong.

### **Other Links:**

[https://www.dakotalegacyinitiative.com/?utm\\_source=google&utm\\_medium=cpc&utm\\_campaign=btd\\_DakotaLegacyInitiative&gad\\_source=1](https://www.dakotalegacyinitiative.com/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=btd_DakotaLegacyInitiative&gad_source=1)

<https://gf.nd.gov/meadowlark-initiative>



# A Quiet Push to Sell Public Lands

## What You Need to Know About the Late-Night House Committee Amendment

David Wilms May 9, 2025



In a late-night move that flew under the radar for most Americans, Representatives Mark Amodei (R-NV) and Celeste Maloy (R-UT) proposed an [amendment](#) to the House Natural Resources Committee's Reconciliation Bill that aims to speed up the process of disposing of federal public lands in Utah and Nevada. The amendment passed largely along partisan lines, with Rep. Hurd (R-CO) serving as the one dissenting Republican vote.

### What's in the Amendment?

The amendment directs the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to dispose of large areas of public land. It overrides the current system laid out by the **Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA)**, the law that has governed how we manage public lands since 1976.

Rather than requiring careful analysis and local input, the amendment mandates that these lands be sold, exchanged, or transferred on an expedited timeline—essentially cutting corners on the planning, environmental review, and public participation that would normally happen under FLPMA.

### What's FLPMA, and Why Does It Matter?

Congress passed FLPMA in 1976, and ensures public lands are managed for multiple uses—grazing, recreation, energy, wildlife and fisheries, clean water, and more. It also establishes that lands

managed by the Bureau of Land Management remain in public ownership unless there's a strong case for disposal. Here's how it typically works:

- **BLM conducts land use planning**, including public meetings and coordination with state and local governments.
- **Lands identified for disposal** go through a transparent review process, often including environmental analysis under the **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)**. Just because land is identified as suitable for disposal, does not require that the land must be sold, nor does it provide any timeline for sale.
- **The public gets a chance to weigh in**, including local residents, hunters, ranchers, Tribes, and others who use or value these lands.
- **Sales occur at fair market value**, and include public notice and a competitive bidding process, unless certain exemptions apply.
- **Congressional notification** required for sales exceeding 2,500 acres. Congress has 90-days for either body to formally disapprove, or the sale can proceed.

Of course, this means that the process can be slow because of all of the various boxes that must be checked before a parcel is sold. However, that process exists for good reason. It ensures that land isn't sold off just to meet a short-term political or budgetary goal and that local voices are heard before public land changes hands. Remember, public lands can only be sold once. Once sold for development, they are gone from the federal estate forever.

### **How This Amendment Speeds Things Up—and Cuts You Out**

This amendment alters the FLMPA process in significant ways. It declares that the tens of thousands of acres of public lands identified in the amendment must be offered for sale or exchange and sets a much faster timeline for BLM to make it happen. This is a departure from FLPMA, which doesn't actually require selling lands, by mandating sales. This also means less time for public input, less analysis of how land sales might affect hunting access, habitat, or other public uses, and fewer checks to make sure the transfers actually benefit the public.

### **Where Does the Money Go?**

Under current law, most proceeds from BLM land sales go into the **Federal Land Disposal Account (FLDA)**, created under the **Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act (FLTFA)**. That account helps agencies buy high-priority conservation lands, enter into easements for access, and other purposes that benefit public lands so we don't end up with fragmented landscapes or blocked access. In short,



the proceeds ensure that by selling less desirable lands, we are able to invest in replacing those acres or improving acres in a way that achieves a net positive for our public lands

The new amendment changes that. Instead of using the revenue to improve public land management, it would redirect the money to general Treasury funds to be spread across the entire federal government. In other words, it turns public land into a short-term revenue source, with no guarantee those dollars come back to support land, wildlife, or access.

### **Why It Matters**

Public land management doesn't always need to be slow—but it does need to be smart. When lands are sold off without a full understanding of their value or without hearing from the people who use them, we risk losing more than acreage. We lose hunting grounds. We lose grazing opportunities. We lose access for the next generation.

This amendment may be wrapped in the language of “efficiency,” but what it really does is remove the public—especially local stakeholders—from the decision-making process.

### **Where Things Stand Now**

The amendment has passed the House Natural Resources Committee but has not yet been voted on by the full House. The Senate would also need to weigh in, and it's unclear whether this provision will make it through intact.

Still, the fact that such a sweeping change was introduced late at night, with minimal discussion, is a reminder of how important it is to stay informed and involved. Public lands are part of what makes this country unique—open to all, rich in opportunity, and managed with a long view. Selling them off behind closed doors is the wrong way to go.

**If you would like to email your members of Congress about this issue, [you can take action here](#).**

*David Willms is associate vice president for public lands at the National Wildlife Federation. He is a passionate hunter, hiker, and backpacker, and when he's not at work, he can be found exploring our nation's public lands with his family.*

## ***NEW POLL: North Dakota Voters Strongly Reject Proposals that Will Cost Taxpayers Money, Eliminate Public Participation, and Remove Safeguards for Public Lands, Waters, and Wildlife***



***North Dakota voters – including MAGA supporters and rural North Dakotans – overwhelmingly reject Congressional and Executive Branch proposals that would let oil and gas companies exploit our national public lands without paying fair market rates and that would reduce local community input and safeguards for wildlife habitat, recreation (including hunting and fishing), and drinking water resources. The voters also oppose leaving taxpayers – and not oil companies – on the hook for cleanup after development. The values that unite North Dakotans against repeal of these essential safeguards could not be clearer, with near-universal agreement across geography and ideology that the **most important uses of national public lands are: helping to keep air and water clean (91%), conserving natural areas for future generations (88%), providing a place for wildlife to live (85%), providing a place for outdoor recreation (81%), and protecting historic sites (80%).** Just 42% of North Dakotans felt the same about providing land to be leased for oil and gas development.***

*They know what they're talking about too – nearly nine-in-ten North Dakota voters say they've spent time on national public lands in the past year. That's all according to a new poll of 400 North Dakota voters conducted by New Bridge Strategy for the National Wildlife Federation, part of a first-of-its-kind survey of 3,200 voters in eight western states – CO, MT, NV, NM, ND, SD, UT, and WY – for their views on oil and gas development on national public lands.*

*The survey further demonstrates broad, bipartisan support for specific wildlife, recreation, local community, and drinking water safeguards, as well as fiscal reforms that put taxpayers first in the development and subsequent clean up of national public lands. This support runs counter to several of the recent Congressional and*



*Administrative proposals that subsidize oil and gas companies at the expense of hardworking Americans and our shared national public lands:*

- *Republican voters in North Dakota are most supportive (71%) of keeping the current requirements that oil and gas companies, rather than taxpayers, pay for all of the clean-up and land restoration costs after drilling is finished.*
- *Nearly nine-in-ten North Dakota voters (87%) want to keep the fees that oil and gas companies pay to lease and develop publicly owned resources at their current levels.*
- *The majority (83%) of North Dakota voters are opposed to eliminating the \$5 per acre fee that oil and gas companies who want to drill on national public lands must pay, which helps cover the cost to review whether those lands are appropriate for development or whether they should be prioritized for wildlife habitat, outdoor recreation, or other uses.*
- *More than nine-in-ten voters across North Dakota want to see taxpayer interests protected when it comes to oil and gas development on national public lands.*
- *The majority (81%) of North Dakota voters oppose reducing the review process and opportunities for public input regarding decisions about what takes place on national public lands, including potential oil and gas development.*
- *More than four-in-five North Dakota voters, across party lines (89%), agree on the importance of exercising caution when it comes to oil and gas development on national public lands, including by avoiding development near rivers and streams that could risk drinking water sources, or in wildlife migration areas.*

*You can access the full polling results [here](#) and a point-by-point contrast between current Administrative and Congressional proposals against westerners' views [here](#).*



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# Conservation Notes

## *Habitat, Habitat, and More Habitat*

**Issue #115, April 2025**

North Dakota hunters and the North Dakota Game and Fish Department (NDGFD) are both concerned about habitat. Without habitat there are no game species to hunt. Without hunters, the NDGFD does not have an income source to manage game populations. The habitat problem makes hunters and the NDGFD mutual partners in solving the problem. Since North Dakota is 93 percent privately owned, the habitat problem will not be solved without landowner input and support.

The NDGFD came up with recommendations from the North Dakota Habitat and Hunting Access Summit held December 17, 2024. Probably one of the most important recommendations was to “develop a broad coalition of partners to propose a habitat program that provides incentives and rental payments to landowners for developing grassland and wetland habitat”. These partnerships should include agricultural and energy entities, as well as conservation.” Another integral recommendation was to “develop habitat teams to provide on-the-ground assistance for private landowners implementing habitat projects.” These two recommendations, if implemented properly, could go a long way to begin to solve the habitat problem.

Therefore, hunters, private landowners, and the NDGFD need to come together, working with the legislature and nonprofit groups to develop programs that will promote habitat development on private lands. This includes a payment schedule that will provide the incentives for private landowners to participate in programs that expand habitat on North Dakota farms and ranches and in turn may also allow access to hunters. In order to keep North Dakota hunting legendary, and the economic stimulus that hunting creates, we need to act soon, time is of the essence!

For more information on this message or other conservation topics, contact: John Bradley, Executive Director, North Dakota Wildlife Federation, ([jbradley.ndwf@gmail.com](mailto:jbradley.ndwf@gmail.com)), Mike McEnroe, Past President, North Dakota Wildlife Federation([memcenroe@midco.net](mailto:memcenroe@midco.net)) or Rick Nelson, Past President, North Dakota Chapter, The Wildlife Society, ([bluebill@bis.midco.net](mailto:bluebill@bis.midco.net)). For a complete list of Conservation Notes visit ([ndctws.org](http://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](http://www.northdakotawildlife.org) for upcoming board meetings information.

**June 3rd-6th - NWF Annual Meeting, Minneapolis MN**

**June 24th-26th - America's Grasslands Conference, Kearney NE**

**July 23rd - NDWF Board Meeting, Jamestown ND**

**January 9th-10th, 2026 – NDWF Annual Convention, Fargo ND**

## Make an Impact

For over 80 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