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Conservation Notes

Current topics and issues affecting hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation in our North Dakota.

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Hard Winter-Inadequate Habitat

North Dakota winters can be hard on everything; people, livestock, wildlife, and infrastructure. ND Game and Fish Department winter deer surveys in 2023 reported numerous die offs across the state. Likely other species like pheasants were similarly impacted. To effectively manage our wildlife resources, we need to provide abundant, high-quality habitat. This is especially important during harsh winters.

But ND continues to lose more habitat every year. Not enough is being done to provide the habitats needed to help wildlife survive winters and speed population recovery. North Dakota Wildlife Federation and other wildlife organizations proposed a million-acre habitat plan several years ago (CN#48). If elected officials ignore the needs of wildlife, then opportunities for hunters will continue to decline. Foregone opportunities will decrease outdoor recreation opportunities and local economies that depend on spending by resident and non-resident hunters, especially on small-town main streets.

Therefore, ND legislators should advocate an increased cap in the Federal CRP acreages in the 2023 Farm Bill and for a State CRP-type program using the State's Outdoor Heritage Fund or Legacy Fund to address the growing need in our state. Developing a million acres of new wildlife habitat using the diverse number of tools in agricultural and conservation programs will benefit our outdoor users, our landowners, and our wildlife, soil, and water resources.

For more information on this 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 (memcenroe@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.