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## Conservation Notes

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

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### Hunting and Fishing – Getting Away from COVID

One of the most important aspects of living in North Dakota is our ability to get outside and enjoy a wide variety of outdoor recreation activities. Hunting and fishing make up a huge part of the outdoor experiences in our state generating millions of dollars for small towns. For example, a study by NDSU for the 2017-18 hunting and fishing seasons showed that residents spent \$486 million in rural areas.

Hunting and fishing are deeply ingrained in our heritage and serve important social functions. Spending time in the North Dakota outdoors with our families, relatives and friends serves as bonding experiences and provides relief from daily stresses. The importance of hunting and fishing to our mental health is an under appreciated aspect of what makes North Dakota a great place to live.

But the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has changed everything about our lives. The danger of contracting the virus has resulted in changes we never could have imagined a year ago. Family gatherings, visits with friends, meeting for dinner at a favorite restaurant ... all our “normal” activities have been upended and the strain on our mental health is a concern to many. Social distancing while hunting and fishing can be safely undertaken because they are done outside serving as a break from the ongoing worry about the pandemic.

Therefore, we should continue to take advantage of the hunting and fishing opportunities in North Dakota. State Agencies need to promote and expand hunting and fishing opportunities as ways to relieve stress from COVID-19. Adhering to social distancing guidelines reduces the risk of contracting the virus while we safely enjoy these activities. In this time of extreme mental stress, hunting and fishing done safely can provide positive ways to help maintain our mental health.

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 ([www.ndctws.wordpress.com](http://www.ndctws.wordpress.com))-articles.