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Conservation Notes

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

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Drought-The Long and Short of It

The dry fall of 2020 and drought in most of 2021 have had a severe negative impact on North Dakota's landscape. Hit hard have been our wildlife resources and ranching and farming economies. While most of the news has been about our ag sector, severe impacts to wildlife include poor wetland conditions for waterfowl production, limited insect production essential for pheasants and grouse broods and other birds, intensive grazing on prairie grasslands, and haying on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) lands, leaving minimal cover for nesting birds, and other wildlife. The land changes and stress from the drought conditions have also resulted in decimated deer populations in certain areas from epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD).

Drought has significantly impacted wildlife populations and the outdoor opportunities they provide for our citizens. Wildlife resources are a significant part of our economy and important to our people, especially small-town main street. Impacts to wildlife need to be considered in our responses to drought.

Periodic drought is normal for our area. But we lack a proactive response to minimize the immediate short- and long-term impacts to wildlife. We should have strategies that plan for when droughts occur and strategically mitigate impacts that include wildlife, farming, and ranching.

Therefore, the State Game and Fish Department, in coordination with state and federal land management agencies and wildlife conservation organizations should develop and implement a long-term drought mitigation plan that gives equal consideration to wildlife resources along with farming and ranching.

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(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 (www.ndctws.wordpress.com)-articles.