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## Conservation Notes

*Current topics and issues affecting hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation in our North Dakota.*  
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### Wetland Easements-An Investment in Public Values

Water is our most valuable resource on the northern prairie. Ten thousand years ago glaciers receded leaving their marks on North Dakota's landscape in the form of numerous depressions that would capture rain, snow, and runoff and become wetlands. Wetland functions provide numerous economic benefits to North Dakota by minimizing floods, recharging ground water, carbon sequestration, capturing contaminants, providing pollinator habitat, livestock water, and valuable fish and wildlife habitat. The economy of our citizens and State benefit greatly from these wetland functions.

But wetlands are often drained, converted to single purpose agricultural production or urban and infrastructure development, resulting in the loss of their functions and economic benefits to our citizens. To balance the continuing loss of wetland functions, **easements** are a common land investment practice to reimburse willing seller landowner(s) for their commitment to protect wetlands and their functions. They achieve public purposes and services while providing income for farmers and ranchers, leaving the land in private ownership. Negotiated at fair market value, **wetland protection easements**, have been implemented by over 15,000 landowners in the State, with a waiting list for additional contracts. Funded by sportsmen's dollars (Duck Stamps), they offer a practical and economic incentive to maintain a diversified landscape while providing an alternative to the loss of wetland functions.

Therefore, it is important for policy makers to understand the role the voluntary conservation easement program plays to protect the valuable functions of wetlands for our citizens now and in the future, while providing landowners with compensating income.

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.