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Conservation Notes

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

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Keeping Trust Lands

North Dakota Trust Lands, commonly known as school lands, are one of our North Dakota's greatest State-owned land assets. The Department of Trust Lands manages over 700,000 acres of an original 2.5 million acres of school lands to generate funding for Common Schools, North Dakota Universities, and schools for the deaf and blind. During the 2019-21 biennium, the Department of Trust Lands provided \$366,756,000 or \$1,592.35 per student to schools across North Dakota. The current economic value of these lands is derived from minerals, agricultural production, and investments. These lands provide direct and indirect income to the State through a myriad of recreation opportunities and economic values from citizen users such as hunters, bird watchers, hikers, and other recreationists, as well as water quality and soil quality health benefits.

But there is continued pressure for the Department of Trust Lands to sell these assets. Not necessarily to the current lessees, who are trying to make a living off the land, but to others for a variety of reasons. If we keep these lands as state owned assets, then we will continue to provide local farmers and ranchers an opportunity to lease them for their local operation while providing income for North Dakota school kids. We will keep these 700,000 acres available for hunting and other recreational opportunities and dollars they generate for local main street businesses.

Therefore, North Dakota Trust Lands should not be sold and should remain available for the wide variety of public uses that support local landowners and important recreational activities.

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.