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Bismarck,

Conservation Notes

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

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Hunting and Fishing Benefits Small Town Businesses

Hunting and fishing are some of North Dakota's greatest assets and are particularly important to rural North Dakota economies. Hundreds of thousands of our citizens and our nonresident friends and family hunt and fish, supporting thousands of jobs, and generating millions of dollars for our small-town businesses and state tax coffers. A NDSU study for the years 2017-18 found that hunters and fishermen contributed \$2.1 billion input to the state's economy and \$48.2 million in state level tax collection. The State's Tourism Department emphasis on the importance of hunting and fishing in its advertisement shows the importance to the State. "*Hunters Welcome*" signs in our small towns are a testament to the value local businesses place on this specific asset.

In the past there have been an abundance of outdoor opportunities. But these opportunities have significantly declined in the last few years because of rapid loss of habitat and access. If we can find novel solutions that will increase habitat and access, then we can increase the critical economic support hunting and fishing provide to small towns. The state legislature is THE entity that can develop solutions to increase habitat, access and ultimately protect small town businesses.

Therefore, the House and Senate should pass legislation that provides incentives to landowners to increase habitat and increase access. These incentives could be direct payments, tax breaks, statewide campaigns to promote hunting and fishing or other new and novel ideas. Working with landowners, local communities and hunting and fishing groups, the legislature can develop sound fiscal programs that ensure the economic and social values of hunting and fishing remain strong.

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.