

Hearing on HB 1400
Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee
March 20, 2025

Testimony of Mark Staples, registered lobbyist for The Nature Conservancy in North Dakota

Chair Patten and members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee:

For the record, my name is Mark Staples, external affairs manager for The Nature Conservancy in North Dakota. Our nonprofit organization has been working to help people and nature thrive for more than 70 years, including on-the-ground conservation in North Dakota since 1971. We work alongside private landowners, state and federal agencies, and nonprofit partners to restore and improve management of lands and waters.

The Nature Conservancy supports HB 1400. We appreciate the work done on this bill while it was in the House and encourage the committee to consider an amendment that would strengthen the bill, ultimately supporting the continued development of energy resources while balancing impacts to wildlife habitat and working agricultural lands.

Purchasing and maintaining easements and leaseholds is a sensible use of the Environmental Impact Mitigation Fund, and we urge the committee to amend Section 2, on line 21 of page 2 of HB 1400 to ensure that these funds result in lasting benefits for North Dakotans:

c. Purchasing and maintaining easements or leaseholds to be held for no less than the duration of adverse impacts.

Energy siting experts with The Nature Conservancy have partnered with energy developers for years on best practices for avoiding sensitive habitat whenever possible and offsetting the effects of development and operation where impacts cannot be avoided. Developers who have chosen to voluntarily contribute to this fund have demonstrated a vested interest in seeing these dollars deliver on their mitigation goals, and this amendment would ensure their mitigation goals are met.

We urge the committee to consider and adopt this amendment and ultimately vote for a Do Pass recommendation on HB 1400.