



NORTH DAKOTA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

TESTIMONY OF JOHN BRADLEY NORTH DAKOTA WILDLIFE FEDERATION HOUSE BILL 1014 SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE MARCH 1, 2023

For the record, I am John Bradley, executive director of the North Dakota Wildlife Federation. Please accept my written testimony on behalf of our thousands of members in 15 affiliated wildlife and sportsmen's clubs across North Dakota that make up the North Dakota Wildlife Federation.

The North Dakota Wildlife Federation urges the Senate Appropriations Committee to support the Outdoor Heritage Fund line item in the in the Industrial Commission budget. In fact, we would encourage the Committee to raise the Outdoor Heritage Fund from the Governor's recommendation of \$15 million per biennium to \$20 million per biennium to help meet the need for quality wildlife habitat in our state.

North Dakota's Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF) may be the best conservation tool in the state, yet if you stopped any hunter or angler at your favorite outdoor store, they would probably give you a blank stare if you asked them what the Outdoor Heritage Fund does. It's understandable as projects are not highlighted well on the landscape. When you drive down a gravel road you might see a brood of pheasants run into some quality habitat, but you likely won't see signs on that property like you do with PLOTS, WMAs or WPAs saying that cover was a OHF project. Still, the habitat and access projects are out there, benefiting North Dakota's habitat, wildlife, farmer, rancher, and sportsmen.

The Outdoor Heritage Fund began in 2013 and was established to provide grants to state agencies, tribal governments, political subdivisions, and nonprofit organizations, with higher priority given to projects that enhance conservation practices. Since its inception, OHF grants have proven valuable to a variety of projects on both private and public land. The OHF is funded from oil and gas production tax revenue and that money supports projects such as access to public and private lands for sportsmen, farming and ranching stewardship practices for stronger soil and cleaner water, fish and wildlife habitat improvements, and the creation and maintenance of outdoor recreation areas.

Outdoor Heritage Fund projects have benefited every county in North Dakota. The merit-based grant cycle awards Millions of dollars to projects across the state and with every project requiring at least a 25% match from outside partners, the impact on the landscape gets maximized. That means rotational grazing systems can be implemented to restore grasslands on private ground. It means scattered parcels of degraded farmland can be restored back to grass. It

means that pollinator plots that benefit both monarchs and pheasants get planted in the spring. And it means that the popular walking trail in the small town that is in dire need of repair gets fixed. All in all, the Outdoor Heritage Fund has been widely successful and deserves the Committee's support.

Sincerely,

John Bradley
Executive Director
North Dakota Wildlife Federation