



## NORTH DAKOTA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

**Testimony of John Bradley**  
**North Dakota Wildlife Federation**  
**House Bill 1260**  
**Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee**  
**March 23, 2023**

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

For the record, I am John Bradley, executive director of the North Dakota Wildlife Federation. I'm here today representing our thousands of members in 15 affiliated wildlife and sportsmen's clubs across North Dakota that make up the North Dakota Wildlife Federation.

NDWF supports HB 1260. The Wildlife Federation has a strong track record of working with the North Dakota Game and Fish Department on a variety of issues facing sportsmen and women, agriculture partners, and the public's fish, game, and non-game critters. From habitat work to public access, the Federation finds common ground that works for North Dakota's sportsmen and women.

We believe that the Game & Fish Department should have a full toolbox when it comes to wildlife habitat programs in the state. The first section of this bill authorizes the Department's program managers the authority to develop and execute agreements with private landowners, allowing for a more efficient Department. While we encourage the Department to seek additional access opportunities, we understand that a vast majority of the North Dakota's land is private and it is crucial for wildlife conservation to create and protect habitat on private lands, regardless of its access status.

North Dakotans are passionate about elk hunting, often waiting years for the once in a lifetime opportunity. Most hunters are excited about a growing population of elk and the increased opportunity it provides. But we also know that localized problem elk can knock down fences, eat standing crop and haystacks, and can be a major headache for some landowners. Section two of the bill hopes to address North Dakota's growing elk populations and give the

Department a tool to reduce future conflicts in areas where localized elk are becoming a nuisance to landowners.

We know that to efficiently control elk populations, we need to manage the cow population. The public hunter is the best tool at accomplishing this. Unfortunately, many elk have learned to hang out on private land off-limits to public hunting. The intent of the second section is to allow the Department to incentivize landowners who are experiencing problems with elk. The landowners receive an antlerless elk tag after allowing public hunting access to their lands for antlerless elk. The Federation only supports this section if the public hunter has an opportunity to access these private lands and that this program is only focused on antlerless elk. To that end, we offered a friendly amendment to HB 1260 that was adopted by the House. (Subsection 7, Line 9-11 of the proposed bill).

Additionally, we would like to see the Department engage in a stakeholder process where the public can weigh in on elk management on both public and private land. We are confident that this Game and Fish Department will work with the public hunter and private landowner to find solutions for the public's growing elk herds.

We urge a Do Pass on HB 1260.