



House Energy and Natural Resources Committee
Testimony on HB 1260

North Dakota Game and Fish Department
Bill Haase, Assistant Wildlife Division Chief
January 24, 2025

Chairman Porter and members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee, my name is Bill Haase, and I serve as the Assistant Wildlife Division Chief for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department (Department). I am testifying today in support of HB 1260.

This bill was introduced at the request of the Department to address hunting pressure and improve the biological management of mule deer in the badlands. In the spring of 2022, the Department convened a work group to take a comprehensive look at hunting pressure in the badlands. This group included representatives from North Dakota hunting organizations, a badlands landowner, and a landowner/hunter not representing a specific organization. Over the course of these discussions, the group explored numerous topics and options. HB 1260 reflects one common-sense change that had unanimous support from the group.

Under current law, non-resident any-deer archery licenses are derived from 15% of the preceding year's mule deer gun license allocation. Mule deer, due to their unique habitats, behaviors, and distinct physical characteristics of a white rump, are a species we can monitor closely through aerial surveys which are conducted each spring and fall. These surveys allow us to classify mule deer by sex and age, giving the Department detailed knowledge about population trends and dynamics.

However, the current law forces the Department to base non-resident any deer archery license allocations on outdated population data from the previous year. This delay can create misalignment between license allocation and real-time population dynamics, especially since population declines typically occur much faster than recoveries. A recent example was in 2023 when the Department issued 862 non-resident any deer archery licenses following the harsh winter of 2022. The allocation should have been 337 if we utilized the current years mule deer gun license allocation.

This change ensures that allocations are more accurately aligned with population trends, while prioritizing the long-term health of one of North Dakota's most cherished big game species.

We do not anticipate any significant changes to the current application deadline for non-resident any-deer archery licenses if this legislation is passed.

Included with my testimony is a list of license trends under the current law, illustrating the impact of basing allocations on the previous year's data.

For these reasons, the Department respectfully urges the committee to issue a "Do Pass" recommendation for HB 1260. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Non-Resident Any Deer Archery allocation

2018 – 502

2019 – 607

2020 – 780

2021 – 780

2022 – 810

————— Severe Winter Loss

2023 – 862

2024 – 337

2025 – 337