

Hearing on SCR 4002
Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee
Jan. 23, 2025

Written testimony of Mark Staples, external affairs manager, The Nature Conservancy in North Dakota

Chair Luick and members of the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee:

For the record, my name is Mark Staples, external affairs manager for The Nature Conservancy in North Dakota. Our 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 and partner organizations to restore and improve management of lands and waters in the state.

The Nature Conservancy does not support SCR 4002. The conservation agreements that private landowners enter into with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service are done so with the understanding and confidence that their lands would continue to be available for the enjoyment and benefit of North Dakotans into the future. Removing that guarantee would allow decision-makers of today to invalidate assurances given to past generations and weaken the continued availability of natural resources for future generations.

Voluntary land protection agreements are not right for every landowner, and private citizens are free to not use that tool to manage their own lands. But those who have chosen to make sure their land would be protected against advancing development should be respected. Doing so helps steward the natural resources of this great state for years to come.

Roughly one million acres of land are lost to conversion in the United States every year. We urge the committee to continue protecting the integrity of voluntary agreements made by the private landowners of North Dakota.