

Testimony of David Dewald
Sportsmen Representative
Interim Natural Resources Committee

Chairman Erbele, Members of the Legislative Interim Natural Resources Committee,

My Name is David Dewald, I'm currently the President of the North Dakota Wildlife Federation and along with Brian Schanilec, we will again represent sportsman on this interim committee to study hunter access to public and private lands.

First I would like to thank the NDGF and ITD Department's leadership and staff for the all of the hard work that went into making electronic posting a success. Without their expertise and dedication this project would not be where it is today. I had the opportunity to visit with Brian Hosek many times over this past year and understand some of the frustrations he had getting everything up and running and helping landowners and sportsman understand electronic posting. I would also like to thank the NDGF Communications Staff for all of the media work they did to get the electronic posting message out to sportsmen and women across North Dakota.

What is the hunter's response to electronic posting? That depends on which one you talk to. Whether you are talking to one that readily adapts to and uses new technology or one the struggles with new technology, doesn't have a smartphone or has trouble accepting change. Electronic posting definitely is a change on how we hunt. We now need to have our smartphones ready in order make sure a parcel is not posted. For some that is not new, we had our smartphones or Garmin's up and running looking for public land on apps using either free NDGF online information or through purchased apps such as OnX Hunt or BaseMap. Some hunters have been using OnX Hunt or BaseMap to obtain land ownership names. Kudos to NDGF for getting OnX Hunt to provide three free months of access to their app for hunters in North Dakota.

For those hunters already using the available technology, the biggest complaint was how long it took them to get the apps open to use. Those that used it found having contact information available, 56% as reported by NDGF, a big plus. Contact information tied to land parcels had not been available on any of the apps until e-posting came about. I would personally like to thank those landowners/operators across North Dakota that did publish contact information. I did talk to one hunter that

used electronic posting to line up a youth duck hunt. He found the area he wanted to hunt, used the electronic posting app, and fortunately the landowner had published contract information and he was able to make the contact and get permission for a successful hunt.

I am sure there are many success stories like or similar to that one. But there are many hunters that have found the new technology cumbersome and will need to adapt to the new technology or get some help, such a grandkid, to help navigate. Yesterday I received an email from a hunter that expressed those frustrations, but very complementary of his grandson that came along and help him navigate through the new technology.

We will need to work out some of the glitches of electronic posting. Most of them through great individuals at the NDGF Dept. making modifications and improvements. Some may need legislative action and hopefully this committee can come to an agreement on how to get that done.

I think the first year of electronic posting was a success for the majority of hunters. Frustrations do exist in getting used to the new technology and in some cases the time it took figure out if the land was posted. I'm sure there were some missed opportunities this fall as hunters watched a big buck run away as they tried to figure out if the land was electronically posted. I believe most of those frustrations will get better as technology is adopted. Hopefully we can come up with some ways to help hunters adopt and adapt to this new way of posting land.

But I think this committee needs to look at other issues dealing with access. We have some public lands that are difficult or impossible to access. Can this interim committee look at ways to provide the NDGF Department with new tools to work with landowners to make access to public land easier? Can this committee look at ways for the NDGF to streamline their land purchase opportunities, increase their land purchase budget, and provide more habitat and hunter access opportunities. Can this committee look at ways to streamline the process for NGO's to purchase land from willing sellers to provide more habitat and hunter access opportunities.

I think we can and I urge this committee to take a hard look at these issues along with working out any glitches to electronic posting.