



Senate Judiciary Committee
Testimony on SB 2344

North Dakota Game and Fish Department
Greg Link

February 15, 2021

Madam Chair Larson and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, my name is Greg Link; I serve as Conservation and Communications Division for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department (Department). I am testifying today to support the intent of SB 2344. We have worked with Senator Dwyer to address some concerns regarding potentially unintended consequences of the bill.

The Department operates and manages several public shooting ranges on properties we own or manage through lease from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. These ranges provide opportunity for both new and experienced hunters and recreational shooters to become more proficient with their firearms, as well as, properly sight-in their firearms. The ranges are important for recruiting new hunters and sport shooters, in addition to retaining the ones we already have. They are used heavily by members of the public.

For safety, risk management, routine upkeep, and for conducting special training events, we do impose certain restrictions and limitations on their use, and at times have the need to periodically close the ranges for such purposes. ND Administrative Rules 30-04-02-05 (as attached) provides Game and Fish the authority to “regulate” the lawful use of our shooting ranges. As a result, we temporarily close the ranges for maintenance, repairs, mowing, and clean-up. We also restrict .50 caliber rifles and fully automatic weapons on portions of our ranges. For obvious safety reasons, we close all ranges we manage at sunset. We give some Special Use permits for competition use of the range (however, we have limited them to a specific time and yardage – i.e., we only close the 100-yard range, and leave open the 200 and 25-yard ranges.) We have also closed some of the ranges for designated law enforcement and military training, and for special Hunter Education “hands-on” shooting seminars.

We don’t believe the sponsors of the bill intended to prohibit agencies and political subdivisions, such as the Department, from safely operating and managing those ranges that are extremely important to the public. However, as originally provided in Section 1 and Subsection 1(a) of the bill, that would be the result.

We have talked to some of the bill sponsors and offered up the following proposed exemption clause:

Beginning on page 1, line 17: "...firearms, unless the closing or limitation of hours is required for maintenance, law enforcement training, military training, hunter education, or other special activities associated with the shooting sports, ~~and~~ or the limitation applies equally..."

For the rationale provided, please accept the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's SUPPORT of the passage of SB 2344 with the stated amendment.

ND Game & Fish Department WMA Public Shooting Ranges

Administrative Rules

30-04-02-05. Firearms.

Use of firearms on wildlife management areas is allowed, except in a reckless and indiscriminate manner, and as otherwise posted at public road entry points. A person discharging a firearm on a department-designated target range shall not be considered to be engaging in indiscriminate shooting if conducted in accordance to the below rules specified for wildlife management area rifle/handgun shooting ranges and wildlife management area shotgun shooting ranges. The use of tracer rounds or exploding targets, or both, is prohibited on all wildlife management areas.

Wildlife management area rifle/handgun range rules:

1. Range hours are from sunrise to sunset.
2. Shooting permitted only from established benches to designated target stands.
3. No firearms may be handled when the range has been declared "clear" and people are down range. When any person is down range, all firearms must have the muzzle pointed down range, action open, ejection port or cylinder up, and magazine removed.
4. Exploding targets are prohibited. Only paper or cardboard targets are permitted.
5. Tracer, armor piercing, and steel core ammunition is prohibited.
6. Persons destroying target posts or other property are liable for replacement or costs associated with replacement.
7. Only handheld or shoulder-fired firearms are permitted.
8. Fully automatic firearms are prohibited.
9. Centerfire rifles .50 caliber or larger are prohibited.

Wildlife management area shotgun range rules:

1. Range hours are from sunrise to sunset.
2. Only use of shotguns is permitted on a shotgun range. Handgun and rifle use is prohibited on a shotgun range.
3. Use of buckshot or slugs is prohibited.
4. Only commercially manufactured clay targets may be used.
5. All spent shells and other materials must be placed in the trash receptacles or taken away from the range by the range user.

History: Amended effective April 1, 1986; April 1, 2006; January 1, 2014; October 1, 2017.

General Authority: NDCC 20.1-11-05

Law Implemented: NDCC 20.1-11-05