



March 1, 2023

Appropriations Committee
North Dakota Legislative Branch

RE: 1014 Relating to a Bank of North Dakota retention incentive program; to amend and reenact sections 6-09.7-05 and 54-17.7-01, subsections 3 and 4 of section 54-17.7-04, and section 54-63.1-01 of the North Dakota Century Code and section 8 of chapter 42 of the 2021 Session Laws, relating to fuel production facility loan guarantee reserve funding, the powers of the North Dakota pipeline authority, definitions for the clean sustainable energy authority, and a transfer of Bank of North Dakota profits to the general fund; to provide a contingent appropriation; to provide for a transfer; to provide an exemption; to provide for a report; and to declare an emergency.

Dear Chairperson and Respected Members of the Appropriations Committee,

On behalf of the nearly 2,000 members in Audubon Dakota, a state office of the National Audubon Society, **we support** section SECTION 25 of 1014 relating to the EXEMPTION - OIL AND GAS TAX REVENUE ALLOCATIONS – NORTH DAKOTA OUTDOOR HERITAGE FUND and request this written testimony included as a part of the public hearing record.

The National Audubon Society is a conservation organization focused on birds and their conservation and seeks to bring awareness to the condition of our environment and how changes impact birds, natural resources, our economy, and communities.

North Dakota's Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF) was established a decade ago as a multi-million dollar program to provide grants to state agencies, tribal governments, political subdivisions, and nonprofit organizations, with higher priority given to projects that enhance conservation practices. OHF has had a tremendous impact. Projects have been delivered on both public and private land statewide. The matching component means every dollar is leveraged for greater benefit, and projects have benefited farming, ranching and outdoor recreation.

OHF has made a significant difference across the state, but the need to continue to invest in our natural resources is still needed. Birds are signaling to us that habitat is being lost. We have witnessed steady declines in birds over the past 50 years. Notably, grassland birds, which includes our state bird the western meadowlark, have experienced a 53% population decline since 1970. Across the Great Plains (US and Canada), in 2020 nearly 1.8 million acres of grasslands were lost. Over time in North Dakota, 70% of our native prairies have been lost. Our prairie and wetlands continue to need stewardship.

In summary, the Outdoor Heritage Fund is an asset to our state, effectively restores habitat, supports farming and ranching, and provides public benefits. We support continuing to invest in the Outdoor Heritage Fund.

Thank you for your consideration,

Kristal Stoner

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kristal Stoner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kristal" being more prominent than the last name "Stoner".

Executive Director, Audubon Dakota

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