

TESTIMONY OF JOHN BRADLEY
NORTH DAKOTA WILDLIFE FEDERATION
SENATE BILL 2155
HOUSE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE
MARCH 7, 2025

Chairman Porter and Members of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee:

For the record, I am John Bradley, Executive Director of the North Dakota Wildlife Federation (NDWF). NDWF is supportive of SB 2155.

This bill would ensure a more equitable distribution of pronghorn hunting licenses between gratis hunters and general lottery hunters when antelope populations are low. Currently, the first 50 of any pronghorn tags in each unit are reserved exclusively for gratis, with the remaining licenses split evenly between gratis and the general lottery. For example, if a unit had 54 tags available, the current system would allocate 52 out of the 54 tags to gratis hunters. The results? A potentially decade-long wait for the general public hunter in that unit to be selected for a license.

This bill would establish a consistent 50/50 allocation of pronghorn licenses between landowner and non-landowner hunters. As there is a smaller pool of gratis hunters applying for licenses, they will still have a much higher likelihood of drawing a license relative to the general lottery hunter, but this change will result in a more even distribution. If populations of pronghorn rebound, the gratis holders would return to getting drawn almost every year, if not every year, and the public would also have an increased opportunity.

NDWF would like to see the amended language that was added from the Senate regarding landowners being automatically entered into the general pronghorn lottery removed. The way the amended language is written would force the Department to create a new system to hold the lottery. It would also be unclear if the bonus points from the gratis lottery would carry over to the general lottery and vice versa.

The "must" language in the bill could also create frustration with landowners who would now have to enter credit card information and potentially pay for the license if drawn. The simplest fix would be to remove the language (lines 26-29) from the amendment. At a minimum, changing "must" to "may" would give the landowner the option of entering the general lottery if not selected in the gratis lottery.

We respectfully ask for a Do-Pass recommendation after addressing lines 26-29.