

2025 HOUSE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

HB 1237

2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Energy and Natural Resources Committee Coteau AB Room, State Capitol

HB 1237
1/24/2025

Relating to nonresident hunting licenses.

10:21 a.m. Chairman Porter called the meeting to order.

Members Present: Chairman Porter, Vice Chairman Anderson, Vice Chair Novak,
Representatives: Dockter, Hagert, Headland, Heinert, Johnson, Marschall, Olson, Ruby,
Conmy, Foss

Discussion Topics:

- Clarification of language
- Restricted waterfowl hunting
- Competition for licenses
- Funding for the ND Game and Fish department

10:21 a.m. Representative Tveit introduced the bill and submitted testimony in favor. #31219

10:36 a.m. Casey Anderson, Wildlife Division Chief for the ND Game and Fish Department, testified in opposition and submitted testimony. #31130

10:39 a.m. John Bradley, Executive Director, ND Wildlife Federation, testified in opposition and submitted testimony. #31250

10:41 a.m. Brock Wahl, Chairman of the ND Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, testified in opposition and submitted testimony. #31180

10:42 a.m. Nick Surma, Independent, testified in Opposition

Additional written testimony:

Milton Gutknecht, independent, submitted testimony in favor #31286

Mark Mazaheri, ND Resident, submitted testimony in opposition #31244

Curt Francis, ND Resident, submitted testimony in opposition #31176

Kurt Swenson, ND Resident, submitted testimony in opposition #30957

Kirby Evanger, ND Resident, submitted testimony in opposition #30894

Clint Otto, Member of the Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, submitted testimony in opposition #30880

Jason Dyrdaahl, independent, submitted testimony in opposition #30466

House Energy and Natural Resources Committee

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10:44 a.m. Chairman Porter closed the hearing.

Leah Kuball, Committee Clerk

Good morning all,

I am writing this email in the hopes that it will help in providing enough information for you all as to recommend a **DO NOT PASS** of HB 1237 in its entirety. It has no place being passed, especially given the current status of our greatest natural resource, as well as the lack of quality habitat to sustain them.

As one of the smallest states per capita in the U.S., we still have one of the greatest natural resources to offer the other 49 states: wildlife. This wildlife was, is and always will be managed by the good people of North Dakota and their voices should be heard louder than all others. This wildlife has provided a great economic value to our state and should be regarded and treated as such. It is during times like these when money needs to be spent on conservation efforts for them, so in another 10 years or so, they are that much more prepared for a debilitating winter like the one we just went through in 2022-23. We should not be giving this resource away to others, especially those whom do not contribute fiscally to our great state as tax paying citizens, at a price that is deemed acceptable by a few ill-informed individuals. Our residents are the ones who are here day in and day out, see the crippling effects on the wildlife and what happens when people keep taking and give nothing back.

I want to make it very clear that I am not completely against having non-residents come more often (as this bill would allow). I hunt with them, I am friends with them and appreciate them coming to enjoy our greatest natural resource. I realize that they do contribute to our economy during hunting season, but studies show that it is in no way even close to what is contributed by the tax-paying citizens of this state. When the hunting resource is used up, the non-residents will go away and all that will remain is the residents who were slighted if this bill is passed.

I do not in any way, shape or form believe that this should be a resource that is given away for more time, with the same amount of money. I am not a mathematician, nor do I belong to a budget committee, but I do know that allowing the entire season of hunting instead of two 7-day or one 14-day license for the same amount of money, makes no fiscal sense whatsoever.

I know that these few paragraphs have been written to you many times in the same way, by the same type of people like me who oppose this bill, but everyone needs to understand the implications of this type of legislation. When something so valuable is given away so cheaply, **it is bad for the North Dakota wildlife, our hunting heritage, and the people of this great state.** If this bill is to pass, ND will slip into the "pay to play" category of many other states and hunting as we know it will continue to slip down the slope of being eliminated for the everyday person completely.

Please for the sake of our great state, **do not recommend** the passage of this bill. I appreciate your time and pray you do the right thing. I hope to hear from all of you on your stance on this bill.

Jason Dyrdaahl

West Fargo, ND

I oppose HB1237. If non-residents want to hunt here, we need to ensure they are charged for season-long extraction of our wildlife. If they want cheaper tags, they should move here, establish residency, and pay taxes.

Date: January 22, 2025

To: Members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee

From: Kirby Evanger, Bismarck, ND

Subject: Strong opposition to HB 1237

I am writing as a North Dakota resident hunter **urging you to DO NOT PASS house bill 1237**. I grew up on a farm in North Dakota and have lived here my entire life. Hunting is a life-long passion for me just like it is for so many North Dakota residents who cherish the outdoor hunting opportunities that North Dakota has to offer. This bill is unwise if we want to keep hunting as a heritage for North Dakota residents because this bill will only **further commercialize hunting**. If non-residents are able to hunt small game the entire hunting season for the same fee as a 14-day license, non-residents will be more likely to seek and establish **hunting land leases** meaning non-residents will have exclusive hunting rights to land that is currently potentially available to ND residents. All season hunting will also likely result in more **purchases of hunting land** by non-residents for exclusive access for the non-resident. Whether this leads to more hunting land leases or hunting land purchases or both by non-residents, it means that the resident hunter who lives and works in North Dakota will be pushed out and have far less hunting opportunities.

Access to hunting land in North Dakota is the single largest deterrent to our youth hunters, people interested in hunting with no direct landowner connections, and even experienced hunters who have seen access to land they've hunted on over many years now become off limits. HB 1237 would only serve to **accelerate and further diminish hunting land access for the ND resident**.

While I am opposed to this bill in its entirety for reasons noted above, I am especially concerned about **the impacts on sandhill crane hunting**. Many people do not realize that sandhill cranes are considered "small game" in the hunting regulations, so passage of this bill would open up season-long hunting of sandhill cranes in addition to upland game by non-residents which would be a bad idea for the sandhill cranes and ND resident sandhill crane hunters. I am an avid sandhill crane hunter in North Dakota now for over 40+ years, and anyone who knows anything about cranes knows that **they are extremely sensitive to pressure**. If this bill passes, the hunting pressure on sandhill cranes will likely increase considerably which will negatively impact the cranes and their migration patterns, as well as the availability of land to hunt cranes in addition to the quality of crane hunts for ND residents. Waterfowl seasons in ND are limited to a total of 14 days for non-residents. The same exact reasons for limiting non-resident hunting of ducks and geese to 14 days in North Dakota (i.e. migratory birds, water roosting birds, etc) applies to sandhill cranes as well. Thus, if this bill were to pass, **I would ask that an amendment be made exempting sandhill cranes from season-long hunting for non-resident hunters** and thus, still requiring a maximum of 14 days of hunting for sandhill cranes by non-residents per license purchased.

Many states have commercialized their hunting opportunities because of laws such as this one, and **as a result, hunting is largely open only to wealthy hunters**. Please help keep hunting as a heritage in North Dakota for all hunters to enjoy regardless of their income level by voting no on HB 1237. Thank you.

House Energy and Natural Resources Committee

Testimony on HB 1237 (IN OPPOSITION)

Kurt Swenson, Beulah, ND District 33

Chairman Porter, Vice Chairs Anderson and Novak and members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee, my name is Kurt Swenson from Beulah. I am an avid outdoorsman, enjoying the pursuit of game that North Dakota offers us on our own property and that of neighbors and friends.

Each year we put great effort into developing and restoring wildlife habitat on our land and public lands in partnership with NDGF, we host hunts for youth pheasant opener, veterans' appreciation hunts and give permission to a significant number of hunters each year to enjoy our beautiful land it's bounty. In 2024, I would estimate we had volunteered our land for 20 out of state hunters.

In my personal experience with out of state hunting, this license cost is one of the smaller costs in pursuing out of state game, between hunting equipment, clothing, shells, vehicle depreciation, fuel, food, lodging and other. There is no need to reduce this cost by creating a season long license in lieu of the 2-week period, which can be purchased multiple times if desired.

HB 1237 removes an estimated \$173,000 of funding from the ND Game and Fish, risking funding of access and habitat improvements that are clearly needed based on the December 2024 Habitat and Access Summit held in Bismarck.

If the intent of this bill is to encourage out of state hunters to spend more time in North Dakota, we should 1st look to the results and messages of the Summit – Improving Access and Habitat are top priority – please put your legislative efforts there versus creating more competition for resident hunters on the states limited resources.

I respectfully ask you to vote DO NOT PASS vote on HB 1237.



House Energy and Natural Resources Committee
Testimony on HB 1237

North Dakota Game and Fish Department
Casey Anderson, Chief Wildlife Division
January 24, 2025

Chairman Porter and members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee, my name is Casey Anderson, and I serve as the Wildlife Division Chief for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department (Department). I am testifying today in opposition of HB 1237.

The Department is opposed to HB 1237 for two main reasons. First, it will have a fiscal impact to the Department with a loss of approximately \$173,000 per biennium as shown in the fiscal note. The reason it would have this affect is due to the current license structure which allows a nonresident to hunt the entire season, however, they need to purchase a new license every 14 days. This bill would essentially charge the same amount for an entire season license as a 14-day license currently. Secondly, the Department has heard over the last couple years from the public that the pressure for all hunting, particularly from nonresidents, is getting higher and opportunities to hunt are becoming more restricted. One of the more common complaints for this revolves around upland game (pheasant) hunting and nonresidents being too numerous or out competing residents for hunting spots. As you consider this bill the Department asks that you consider these reasons and give HB 1237 a do not pass recommendation.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I will take questions if you have them.

Dear House Committee,

I am writing in opposition to HB 1237. Non-resident upland hunters can already hunt all season long if they purchase multiple licenses. This bill opens the door for non-resident upland hunters to come to North Dakota for outstanding upland hunting opportunity but contribute less to the management of our game species, if they decide to hunt a longer season. Based on the fiscal note, this would put the Game and Fish Department in a deficit with regards to non-resident upland license sales. Non-resident hunters that come to our great State to take advantage of abundant upland game should be paying a premium to do so. We shouldn't provide a free for all option, if they are going to come to play they should pay to support management appropriately.

Please vote DO NOT PASS on HB 1237.

Sincerely,

Curt Francis



**BACKCOUNTRY
HUNTERS & ANGLERS**
NORTH DAKOTA

**TESTIMONY OF BROCK WAHL
NORTH DAKOTA BACKCOUNTRY HUNTERS AND ANGLERS
HOUSE BILL 1237
HOUSE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCE COMMITTEE
January XX, 2025**

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

The North Dakota Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers recommends a Do Not Pass on House Bill 1237 as it is currently written.

HB 1237 would allow non-residents to hunt upland game and small game with a single purchased license with no adjustments in price. This would result in a notable annual revenue loss for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department.

That funding is necessary to maintain and improve hunting opportunities and to provide support to the wildlife resources in North Dakota. Under current regulations, non-residents can already hunt throughout the year by purchasing multiple licenses. The proposed change would result in a large loss of funds that supports conservation efforts, habitat management, and overall game and fish programs that benefit all hunters, both resident and non-resident.

In order to preserve critical funding for North Dakota's hunting and wildlife management programs, we urge the committee Do Not Pass on HB 1237.

Thank You

Brock Wahl
Chairman
North Dakota Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers
northdakota@backcountryhunters.org



Representative Bill Tveit

House District 33

Testimony for HB Introduction to HB 1237, House Energy & Natural Resources Committee. January 24, 2025

Mr Chairman, Members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee:

For the Record, I am Representative Bill Tveit of Hazen, representing the fine residents of District 33 which is all of Mercer, all of Oliver and the BEST parts of McLean and Morton Counties as well as the Heart of Coal Country where we keep Your Lights On!

HB 1237 is before you at the request of prior residents, many absentee landowners and extended family members of our residents.

I would like to begin by:

1. going through the bill intent,
2. remove an unintentional error by offering an amendment and finally,
3. debunk the fiscal note as written.

1. The intent of HB 1237 is to provide an optional non-resident upland and small game hunting full season license. This option was requested as a convenience for repeat non-resident hunters, family members and non-resident landowners who return often and do not want to take the time to reapply continually throughout the season.

So, lets look at section 1, lines 8 thru 13.

On line 9, a non-resident may purchase.

Line 11 specifies the entire season,.

The balance of Line 11, lines 12 & 13 leave total discretion to the governor, the Department and the Proclamation for the number of licenses issued, and the manner in which this full season option is issued, (which should include fee structure).

2. On lines 20 thru 22, never was it intended to remove the current 14 day non-resident hunt, but to leave that available as an option for those non-resident hunters it best fit. I would request the over strike on lines 20, 21, and 22 be removed.

The Amendment: I would ask you to consider is as follows:

- a. page 1, line 9, following the may purchase add the words an optional
- b. page 1, line 20, after license., leave the overstrike on The and add An optional
- c. page 1, lines 20, 21, & 22, remove the balance of the overstrike.
3. Debunking the fiscal note:

The Fiscal Note, following the amendment, should reflect a positive income for NDGF. Certainly not a loss, based on the following: (remember, I left fee schedules totally up to the Department)

1. A 14 day season is currently priced at \$100.00 with no limit on the number of consecutive 14 license a non-resident can purchase.

Using that logic, one could purchase up to 8 currently offered 14 day licenses for a full season hunt. A total \$800.00 under the current NDCC availability. I would propose a reasonable full season fee based on the above might be not less than \$300.00 but maybe even as high as \$500.00 to \$600.00 for those non-residents wanting that option, and still be a bargain for the avid hunter.

2. Not every non-resident is able or willing to hunt more than 14 days or 2 - 7day split seasons. Thus with the amendment, this option would be still available and no doubt the most widely chosen non-resident option, resulting in minor loss of current revenue.

Chairman Porter, Committee, I would ask that you make the above amendments as requested and give HB 1237 your full support for a Do Pass.

I will stand for questions.

Good morning Chairman Porter and Members of the Committee;

Re: **HB 1237, this bill should get a DO NOT PASS** recommendation from Committee and on the Floor.

Not sure WHY some legislators want a CHEAP, SEASON LONG upland license for non-residents. It makes no sense as license costs are NOT a limiting factor when it comes to non-resident hunters.

The fiscal note says the change to a full season license will cost the NDGF \$173,000/year. So WE LOSE MONEY on this bill?!

Any non-resident that wants to hunt the whole season can already do so. Any one that has the TIME to spend the whole season chasing pheasants in another state obviously has the MONEY, too. License cost is irrelevant.

By comparison, a 14-day non-resident ND upland license costs \$150. A single-day lift ticket at Big Sky Ski Resort costs \$228.00.

There is absolutely no reason to pass a bill that would provide cheap licenses for 716 (2024#) non-resident hunters at the expense of every other license-buying hunter. This amounts to creation of new law benefitting 2.6% on the non-resident upland hunters.

HB 1237 should get a DO NOT PASS recommendation from the Committee.

2024 NR 14-DAY SMALL GAME	
LIC PURCHASED	TOTAL HUNTERS
7	1
6	4
5	3
4	16
3	88
2	603
1	26216
TOTAL	26931

2023 NR 14-DAY SMALL GAME	
LIC PURCHASED	TOTAL HUNTERS
8	1
6	3
5	7
4	28
3	99

2023 NR 14-DAY SMALL GAME	
LIC PURCHASED	TOTAL HUNTERS
2	653
1	24209
TOTAL	25000

2022 NR 14-DAY SMALL GAME	
LIC PURCHASED	TOTAL HUNTERS
8	1
5	4
4	13
3	57
2	446
1	20853
TOTAL	21374

Mark Mazaheri
 2709 10th St N.
 Fargo, ND 58102
 701-799-2525

TESTIMONY OF JOHN BRADLEY
NORTH DAKOTA WILDLIFE FEDERATION
HOUSE BILL 1237
HOUSE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE
JANUARY 24, 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 opposed to HB1237. North Dakota already allows non-residents to buy as many one 14 day license or two 7 day license licenses for small game as the season holds, they just have to continue to purchase them. HB 1237 removes an estimated \$173,000 of funding from the North Dakota Game and Fish Department (NDG&F), risking funding needed for access and habitat improvements. In December, NDG&F held a Habitat and Access Summit, identifying the need for better quality habitat on the ground and more access opportunities for North Dakota sportsmen and women. If the bill's intent is to increase non-residents hunters time spent in North Dakota, we would gladly work with the sponsor to develop a bill that would increase funding for the PLOTS program instead of creating more competition between non-resident and resident hunters.

We urge a Do Not Pass on HB 1237.

From: Milton Gutknecht
516 St Charles
Rapid City, SD 57701
605-348-4151

Re: HB1237

To: Whom it may concern

Although I currently live in Rapid City, SD. I'm originally from Hazen, ND and still refer to it as my "home town."

Along with other relatives, we enjoy returning to Hazen and hunt upland game whenever possible. Getting

right to the point. We are asking the House to consider a change to the non-resident license. Currently the license

allows for 14 consecutive days, or split into two 7 day periods. With travel and all, it's not feasible for us to actually hunt

for more than 2 to 3 days each trip. Currently we are only able to hunt 6 days with a 14 day license. We think the

cost is fair, but it would be nice to pick each day on the license that we are able to hunt. This would allow us more

Flexibility, and the opportunity to make more trips back home. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely:

Milton Gutknecht

2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Energy and Natural Resources Committee

Coteau AB Room, State Capitol

HB 1237

2/6/2025

relating to nonresident hunting licenses.

4:09 p.m. Chairman Porter called the hearing to order.

Members Present: Chairman Porter, Vice Chairman Anderson, Vice Chair Novak,
Representatives: Dockter, Hagert, Headland, Heinert, Johnson, Marschall, Olson, M. Ruby,
Conmy, Foss

Discussion Topics:

- Committee Action

4:10 p.m. Representative D. Anderson moved a Do Not Pass.

4:10 p.m. Representative Ruby seconded the motion.

Representatives	Vote
Representative Todd Porter	Y
Representative Dick Anderson	Y
Representative Anna Novak	Y
Representative Liz Conmy	Y
Representative Jason Dockter	Y
Representative Austin Foss	Y
Representative Jared c. Hagert	Y
Representative Craig Headland	Y
Representative Pat D. Heinert	Y
Representative Jorin Johnson	AB
Representative Andrew Marschall	Y
Representative Jeremy L. Olson	Y
Representative Matthew Ruby	Y

Motion carried: 12-0-1

4:11 p.m. Representative Novak moved to place HB 1237 on the Consent Calendar.

4:11 p.m. Representative M. Ruby seconded the motion.

Voice Vote: Motion carried.

Bill Carrier: Representative Novak

4:12 p.m. Chairman Porter closed the hearing.

Leah Kuball, Committee Clerk

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE
HB 1237 ([25.0459.01000](#))

Energy and Natural Resources Committee (Rep. Porter, Chairman) recommends **DO NOT PASS** and **BE PLACED ON THE CONSENT CALENDAR** (12 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 1 ABSENT OR EXCUSED AND NOT VOTING). HB 1237 was placed on the Tenth order on the calendar.