

**2025 HOUSE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

**HB 1260**

# 2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

## Energy and Natural Resources Committee

Coteau AB Room, State Capitol

HB 1260

1/24/2025

Relating to nonresident deer bow licenses.
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10:45 a.m. Chairman Porter opened the hearing.

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

Representatives Absent: Representative Ruby

### Discussion Topics:

- Aerial Surveys
- Fluctuations of North Dakota mule deer population
- Mule deer license allocation

10:45 a.m. Representative LaurieBeth Hager, North Dakota Representative for District 21, introduced the bill and provided testimony #31200.

10:49 a.m. Bill Haase, Assistant Wildlife Division Chief at North Dakota Game and Fish Department, testified in favor and provided testimony #31035.

10:52 a.m. John Bradley, North Dakota Wildlife Federation, testified in favor and provided testimony #31251.

10:53 a.m. Brock Wahl, Chairman of North Dakota Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, testified in favor and provided testimony #31183.

10:54 a.m. Phil Mastrangelo, Lobbyist for North Dakota Wildlife Society, testified in favor.

### Additional written testimony:

Matthew Williamson, Minot, North Dakota, submitted testimony in favor #30671

Clint Otto, Member of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, submitted testimony in favor #31191.

Clint Otto, Member of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, submitted testimony in opposition #30881

10:55 a.m. Chairman Porter closed the hearing.

*Wyatt Armstrong for Leah Kuball, Committee Clerk*

01/22/2025

Dear Energy and Natural Resources Committee members

I am writing my testimony to support HB1260

Licenses should be based on current year license availability to residents. Our herd population can and has fluctuated dramatically in the course of one year. To allocate licenses based on a previous year of a healthy herd where the following season a herd has been decimated by environmental conditions is an unfeasible system. It is unfair to both resident and non-resident sportsmen allocating tags utilizing this method.

Please vote yes on HB1260

Respectfully submitted,

Matt Williamson  
Minot, ND

Tags are hard enough to come by for North Dakota residences. This bill is supported by a few guides who have wealthy non-resident clients. Oppose HB 1260.



House Energy and Natural Resources Committee  
Testimony on HB 1260

North Dakota Game and Fish Department  
Bill Haase, Assistant Wildlife Division Chief  
January 24, 2025

Chairman Porter and members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee, my name is Bill Haase, and I serve as the Assistant Wildlife Division Chief for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department (Department). I am testifying today in support of HB 1260.

This bill was introduced at the request of the Department to address hunting pressure and improve the biological management of mule deer in the badlands. In the spring of 2022, the Department convened a work group to take a comprehensive look at hunting pressure in the badlands. This group included representatives from North Dakota hunting organizations, a badlands landowner, and a landowner/hunter not representing a specific organization. Over the course of these discussions, the group explored numerous topics and options. HB 1260 reflects one common-sense change that had unanimous support from the group.

Under current law, non-resident any-deer archery licenses are derived from 15% of the preceding year's mule deer gun license allocation. Mule deer, due to their unique habitats, behaviors, and distinct physical characteristics of a white rump, are a species we can monitor closely through aerial surveys which are conducted each spring and fall. These surveys allow us to classify mule deer by sex and age, giving the Department detailed knowledge about population trends and dynamics.

However, the current law forces the Department to base non-resident any deer archery license allocations on outdated population data from the previous year. This delay can create misalignment between license allocation and real-time population dynamics, especially since population declines typically occur much faster than recoveries. A recent example was in 2023 when the Department issued 862 non-resident any deer archery licenses following the harsh winter of 2022. The allocation should have been 337 if we utilized the current years mule deer gun license allocation.

This change ensures that allocations are more accurately aligned with population trends, while prioritizing the long-term health of one of North Dakota's most cherished big game species.

We do not anticipate any significant changes to the current application deadline for non-resident any-deer archery licenses if this legislation is passed.

Included with my testimony is a list of license trends under the current law, illustrating the impact of basing allocations on the previous year's data.

For these reasons, the Department respectfully urges the committee to issue a "Do Pass" recommendation for HB 1260. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Non-Resident Any Deer Archery allocation

2018 – 502

2019 – 607

2020 – 780

2021 – 780

2022 – 810

————— Severe Winter Loss

2023 – 862

2024 – 337

2025 – 337



**BACKCOUNTRY  
HUNTERS & ANGLERS**  
NORTH DAKOTA

The North Dakota Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers asks for a Do Pass recommendation on House Bill 1260 of the 69<sup>th</sup> legislative assembly.

The proposed change to non-resident any deer bow license allocation was agreed upon by the “Badlands License Working Group.” A multi-stakeholder group assembled to address concerns around mule deer hunting in the North Dakota Badlands.

Under current law, non-resident any deer bow licenses are allocated at 15% of the previous year’s resident mule deer buck rifle tags. This means the Department is unable to adjust these non-resident licenses to account for current year’s conditions and year to year population fluctuations.

By aligning the number of available non-resident any deer bow licenses with the current year’s resident allocation, this will allow the Department to apply more biologically sound tag allocations and better manage hunting pressure in western North Dakota.

We urge the committee for a Do Pass on on HB 1260

Brock Wahl  
Chairman  
Board of Directors  
North Dakota Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers  
[northdakota@backcountryhunters.org](mailto:northdakota@backcountryhunters.org)



I misread HB 1260 and would like to redact my opposition comment. I think it is a good idea to have tag allocations based on current year data as opposed to previous year's information. I thank Representative Hager for sponsoring this bill and hope it passes.



## HB 1260

Good Morning Chairman Porter and Members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

For the record, I am Representative LaurieBeth Hager from District 21 in Fargo. District 21 is in the middle of Fargo, just south of Downtown between Highway 10/ Main Avenue and 13<sup>th</sup> Ave, from the Red River on the east to a small western corner of West Fargo.

I am here today with HB 1260 at the request of ND Game and Fish. Some of you may be wondering why a Rep. from the middle of Fargo is the prime sponsor of a mule deer count bill and some of you already realize why. My dad, Ray Hager, was a lifelong deer and upland game hunter and also a longtime lobbyist for Cass County Wildlife. So today I am honored to carry this hunting bill to the Energy and Natural Resource Committee.

HB 1260 deals with how the number of available mule deer licenses are determined. Currently in Century Code the number of licenses is based on the count of the deer population the PREVIOUS year rather than using the current year's count. This can create a problem for hunters seeking licenses--When the mule deer count is taken following a harsh winter that resulted in lowering the mule deer population but the number of deer licenses are based on the previous year. On the other hand, if the conditions were ideal the deer population would be higher but the licenses would be too few to adequately manage the mule deer population.

The past 2 winters have demonstrated this. In the winter of 2022-23 the extreme winter conditions increased the winterkill and decreased the fawn production. However last winter 2023 -2024 was one of the mildest winters on record. According to Casey Anderson of ND Fish and Game, "following a harsh winter, modest license allocations are intended to maintain hunting opportunities and encourage herd population growth in the state."

A simple fix exists: calculate the number of licenses based on the CURRENT year's count of mule deer. Interestingly Mule deer licenses are the only type of big game that uses the previous year data for calculating the number of licenses.

I have received questions from hunters concerned that this bill was brought by outside interest groups or out of state hunters so they could get more licenses. It is not. The purpose of this legislation is to update our Century Code to assure that the number of available licenses is matched to the number of available mule deer.

I am asking members of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee for a green vote and I stand for questions.

TESTIMONY OF JOHN BRADLEY  
NORTH DAKOTA WILDLIFE FEDERATION  
HOUSE BILL 1260  
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 in support of HB 1250 which would allow the North Dakota Game and Fish Department to use current year population numbers instead of the previous year's. Our mule deer population can and has fluctuated dramatically in the course of one year. To allocate licenses based on a previous year of a healthy herd where the following season a herd has been decimated by environmental conditions is a poor system. It is unfair to both resident and non-resident sportsmen allocating tags utilizing this method. Using current year populations is a better reflection of the resource, and ensures that allocations are more accurately aligned with population trends.

We urge a Do Pass on HB 1250.

# 2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

## Energy and Natural Resources Committee Coteau AB Room, State Capitol

HB 1260  
2/7/2025

Relating to nonresident deer bow licenses.
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10:54 a.m. Chairman Porter opened the hearing.

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

### Discussion Topics:

- Committee action

10:55 a.m. Representative Dockter moved a Do Pass.

10:55 a.m. Representative Foss 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	Y
Representative Andrew Marschall	Y
Representative Jeremy L. Olson	Y
Representative Matthew Ruby	Y

10:56 a.m. Motion passed 13-0-0

10:56 p.m. Representative J. Olson will carry the bill.

10:57 p.m. Chairman Porter adjourned the meeting.

*Wyatt Armstrong for Leah Kuball, Committee Clerk*

**REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE**  
**HB 1260 ([25.0886.01000](#))**

**Energy and Natural Resources Committee (Rep. Porter, Chairman)** recommends **DO PASS** (13 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSENT OR EXCUSED AND NOT VOTING). HB 1260 was placed on the Eleventh order on the calendar.

**2025 SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

**HB 1260**

# 2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

## Energy and Natural Resources Committee

Peace Garden Room, State Capitol

HB 1260

3/28/2025

A BILL for an Act to amend and reenact subsection 10 of section 20.1-03-11 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to nonresident deer bow licenses.

9:01 a.m. Chairman Patten opened the meeting.

Members present:

Chairman Patten, Vice Chairman Kessel, Senators: Beard, Boehm, Enget, Gerhardt, and Van Oosting.

### Discussion Topics:

- Mule deer population management
- Non-resident archery licenses
- Current year population data
- Aerial survey methodology

9:01 a.m. Representative Hager, District 21, introduced the bill and submitted testimony in favor #43488.

9:06 a.m. Bill Haase, Assistant Wildlife Division Chief, Game and Fish Department, testified in favor and submitted testimony #44311.

9:16 a.m. John Bradley, Executive Director, North Dakota Wildlife Federation, testified in favor and submitted testimony #44266.

9:19 a.m. Brock Wahl, Chairman, North Dakota Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, testified in favor and submitted testimony #44356.

9:23 a.m. William Haase, Assistant Wildlife Division Chief, Game and Fish Department, testified as neutral and answered committee questions.

9:25 a.m. Chairman Patten closed the hearing.

9:25 a.m. Senator Gerhardt moved a Do Pass.

9:25 a.m. Senator Beard seconded the motion.

<b>Senators</b>	<b>Vote</b>
Senator Dale Patten	Y
Senator Greg Kessel	Y
Senator Todd Beard	Y
Senator Keith Boehm	Y
Senator Mark Enget	Y
Senator Justin Gerhardt	Y
Senator Desiree Van Oosting	Y

Motion Passed 7-0-0.

9:26 a.m. Senator Gerhardt will carry the bill.

9:26 a.m. Chairman Patten closed the hearing.

*Kendra McCann, Committee Clerk*

**REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE**  
**HB 1260 ([25.0886.01000](#))**

**Energy and Natural Resources Committee (Sen. Patten, Chairman)** recommends **DO PASS** (7 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSENT OR EXCUSED AND NOT VOTING). HB 1260 was placed on the Fourteenth order on the calendar. This bill does not affect workforce development.



## HB 1260

Good Morning Chairman Patten and Members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

For the record, I am Representative LaurieBeth Hager from District 21 in Fargo. District 21 is in the middle of Fargo, just south of Downtown between Highway 10/ Main Avenue and 13<sup>th</sup> Ave, from the Red River on the east to a small western corner of West Fargo.

I am here today with HB 1260 at the request of ND Game and Fish. Some of you may be wondering why a Rep from the middle of Fargo is the prime sponsor of a mule deer count bill. My dad, Ray Hager, was a lifelong deer and upland game hunter and also a longtime lobbyist for Cass County Wildlife. So today I am honored to carry this hunting bill to the Energy and Natural Resource Committee.

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A simple fix exists: calculate the number of licenses based on the CURRENT year's count of mule deer. Interestingly Mule deer licenses are the only type of big game that uses the previous year data for calculating the number of licenses.

I have received questions from hunters concerned that this bill was brought by outside interest groups or out of state hunters so they could get more licenses. It is not. The purpose of this legislation is to update our Century Code to assure that the number of available licenses is matched to the number of available mule deer.

I am asking members of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee for a green vote and I stand for questions.

TESTIMONY OF JOHN BRADLEY  
NORTH DAKOTA WILDLIFE FEDERATION  
HOUSE BILL 1260  
SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE  
MARCH 27, 2025

Chairman Patten 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 in support of HB 1260 which would allow the North Dakota Game and Fish Department to use current year population numbers instead of the previous year's. Our mule deer population can and has fluctuated dramatically in the course of one year. To allocate licenses based on a previous year of a healthy herd when the following season that herd has been decimated by disease or a harsh winter is a poor system. It is unfair to both resident and non-resident sportsmen allocating tags utilizing this method. Using the current year populations is a better reflection of the resource and ensures that allocations are more accurately aligned with population trends.

We urge a Do Pass on HB 1260.



Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee  
Testimony on HB 1260

North Dakota Game and Fish Department  
Bill Haase, Assistant Wildlife Division Chief  
March 28, 2025

Chairman Patten and members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, my name is Bill Haase, and I serve as the Assistant Wildlife Division Chief for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department (Department). I am testifying today in support of HB 1260.

This bill was introduced at the request of the Department to address hunting pressure and improve the biological management of mule deer in the badlands. In the spring of 2022, the Department convened a work group to take a comprehensive look at hunting pressure in the badlands. This group included representatives from North Dakota hunting organizations, a badlands landowner, and a landowner/hunter not representing a specific organization. Over the course of these discussions, the group explored numerous topics and options. HB 1260 reflects one common-sense change that had unanimous support from the group.

Under current law, non-resident any-deer archery licenses are derived from 15% of the preceding year's mule deer gun license allocation. Mule deer, due to their unique habitats, behaviors, and distinct physical characteristics of a white rump, are a species we can monitor closely through aerial surveys which are conducted each spring and fall. These surveys allow us to classify mule deer by sex and age, giving the Department detailed knowledge about population trends and dynamics.

However, the current law forces the Department to base non-resident any deer archery license allocations on outdated population data from the previous year. This delay can create misalignment between license allocation and real-time population dynamics, especially since population declines typically occur much faster than recoveries. A recent example was in 2023 when the Department issued 862 non-resident any deer archery licenses following the harsh winter of 2022. The allocation should have been 337 if we utilized the current years mule deer gun license allocation.

This change ensures that allocations are more accurately aligned with population trends, while prioritizing the long-term health of one of North Dakota's most cherished big game species.

We do not anticipate any significant changes to the current application deadline for non-resident any-deer archery licenses if this legislation is passed.

Included with my testimony is a list of license trends under the current law, illustrating the impact of basing allocations on the previous year's data.

For these reasons, the Department respectfully urges the committee to issue a "Do Pass" recommendation for HB 1260. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Non-Resident Any Deer Archery allocation

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————— Severe Winter Loss

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**BACKCOUNTRY  
HUNTERS & ANGLERS**  
NORTH DAKOTA

**TESTIMONY OF BROCK WAHL  
NORTH DAKOTA BACKCOUNTRY HUNTERS AND ANGLERS  
HOUSE BILL 1260  
SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCE COMMITTEE  
March 28, 2025**

Chairman Patten and members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee,

The North Dakota Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers asks the committee for a Do Pass recommendation on House Bill 1260 of the 69<sup>th</sup> legislative assembly.

The proposed change to non-resident any deer bow license allocation was agreed upon by the “Badlands License Working Group.” A multi-stakeholder group assembled to address concerns around hunting pressure in the North Dakota Badlands.

Under current law, non-resident any deer bow licenses are allocated at 15% of the previous year’s resident mule deer buck rifle tags. This means the Department is unable to adjust these non-resident licenses in a timely manner, to account for current year’s conditions and year to year population fluctuations.

By allowing the Department to set the number of available non-resident any deer bow licenses based on the current year’s resident rifle allocation, the Department will be able to apply more biologically sound tag allocations and better manage hunting pressure in western North Dakota.

We urge the committee for a Do Pass recommendation on House Bill 1260.

Brock Wahl  
Chairman  
Board of Directors  
North Dakota Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers  
[northdakota@backcountryhunters.org](mailto:northdakota@backcountryhunters.org)

