

2025 SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

SB 2155

2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Energy and Natural Resources Committee Peace Garden Room, State Capitol

SB 2155
1/23/2025

Relating to gratis antelope licenses.

9:52 a.m. Chairman Patten opened the hearing.

Members present:

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

Discussion Topics:

- Pronghorn tag allocation
- Estimated pronghorn hunter chart
- Gratis license distribution vs. general license
- Fair distribution of tags

9:52 a.m. Senator Cleary testified in favor and submitted testimony #30689 and #30690.

9:56 a.m. Brock Wahl, ND Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, testified in favor and submitted testimony # 30862.

9:59 a.m. Darrell Belisle, ND Bow Hunters Association, testified in favor and submitted testimony #30604.

10:02 a.m. John Bradley, ND Wildlife Federation, testified in favor and submitted #30939.

10:03 a.m. Casey Anderson, Wildlife Division Chief, testified as neutral and submitted testimony #31012 and #31015.

Additional written testimony:

#30413, #30418, #30450, #30472, #30532, #30540, #30603, #30623, #30630, #30637, #30705, #30730, #30739, #30759, #30824, #30871, #30911, #30922.

10:15 a.m. Chairman Patten closed the hearing.

Kendra McCann, Committee Clerk

Please support North Dakota Senate Bil 2155 – Relating to Gratis Antelope Licenses

My name is Jeff Benda, a proud North Dakota resident, outdoor writer, wild game chef, and avid outdoorsman. I am writing to voice my full support for Senate Bill 2155, which seeks to restore fairness and opportunity in pronghorn antelope tag allocations in our state.

North Dakota's pronghorn antelope is a treasure of our Great Plains, a species that has inspired generations of hunters like me to connect with the land. Yet, under the current allocation system, the odds of drawing a tag are heavily skewed. The practice of reserving the first 50 tags in each unit for landowners, coupled with a disproportionate distribution of remaining tags, leaves the majority of public hunters—our children, grandchildren, nephews, nieces, co-workers, and friends—at a significant disadvantage. **In some units, over 90% of the tags go to landowners.** This imbalance limits access for the broader hunting community and threatens the traditions that define North Dakota's outdoor heritage.

By eliminating the preferential allocation of the first 50 tags to landowners and establishing a straight 50/50 split, this bill would return some fairness back to the lottery process.

Consider this - **In 2024, over 1,000 North Dakota residents with 8 or more bonus points were not able to get drawn for a pronghorn antelope tag.** That means a North Dakotan has a better chance to get drawn for an antelope tag in dozens of hunting units in Wyoming vs. their home state!

Why should landowners who live out in western North Dakota where the antelope roam have the only opportunity to hunt antelope? **Why are we excluding the diesel mechanic, public school teacher, nurse, or even the hard-working young farmer who lives east of Bismarck?**

SB 2155 makes it both equitable and essential to maintain the integrity of our hunting culture. Being able to hunt out wildlife is the birthright of every North Dakotan – every American! Hunting is more than a pastime; it is a way to teach responsibility, patience, and respect for the natural world. But if the opportunities to hunt pronghorn antelope continue to diminish for the average resident, we risk losing a vital part of our state's identity.

I have been fortunate to draw a pronghorn tag and experience the thrill of pursuing this incredible animal on North Dakota's open landscapes. Now, I dream of the day when my 9-year-old daughter can have the same chance. But under the current system, the odds are stacked against her. Senate Bill 2155 is a step toward a future where every young hunter can share in the opportunities that shaped the lives of those who came before them.

Hunter and conservationist Randy Newberg once said, "Hunting is not just something we do; it's who we are." This bill reflects that truth. It's not just about increasing the odds of drawing a tag; it's about preserving the values of fairness, access, and shared responsibility for our wildlife.

I urge you to pass Senate Bill 2155 and ensure that the pronghorn antelope remains a symbol of opportunity and connection for all North Dakotans. Together, we can uphold the principles of conservation and equity that make our state's hunting heritage truly great.

Sincerely,

Jeff Benda
Fargo, North Dakota

I am very strongly in support of SB 2155. Despite what looks like an abundance of licenses on the Game & Fish website, I've only been lucky enough to draw a pronghorn tag once in many years of trying. My wife and I had a wonderful time and were glad to spend money in Bowman as part of that hunt weekend. I very much hope that I would have better odds to be able to experience this state's hunting opportunities in the future. Thank you for your time.

SB2155

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 2155, which would restore 172 pronghorn buck tags to the public draw. As an avid hunter and conservationist, I believe this bill strikes a fair balance between landowner privileges and public hunting opportunities.

While I respect the rights of landowners to receive tags, it is essential to ensure that public hunters have equitable access to pronghorn hunting opportunities. Senate Bill 2155 helps maintain fairness in tag allocation, ensuring that the broader hunting community—many of whom contribute to conservation efforts through license fees and excise taxes—has a fair chance to participate in pronghorn hunts.

Trace Bakke

Energy and Natural Resources Committee,

Please vote DO PASS for SB 2155. This is a common sense bill that levels the playing field for sportsman and sportswomen to have a more equitable opportunity to draw a pronghorn tag.

Thank you,

Kerry Whipp

Testimony Opposing SB2155

Chairman Patten and Energy and Natural Resources Committee

My name is Jeremy Maher, and I am a farm and ranch owner in Sioux County, ND. I am here today to oppose SB2155.

This bill proposes reducing the number of gratis tags available to landowners to a strict 50% of the number of buck tags issued. In Unit 6A, this would mean over half of the landowners who applied for a tag in 2024 would not have received one—25% more than last year. For those of us who live and work on the land, this is a significant and unnecessary burden.

If antelope populations were to increase, this issue could resolve itself because the number of tags available would exceed the demand for gratis applications—just as we currently see with deer. However, until that happens, this bill penalizes landowners, making it even harder for us to access the species we help support through responsible land management.

This legislation directly contradicts ongoing efforts by Game and Fish, as well as other groups, to foster positive relationships between landowners and hunters. What incentive is there for a landowner to allow others to hunt on their property when they cannot hunt the species themselves? SB2155 creates division rather than collaboration and will result in fewer open gates for hunters.

I urge you to reject SB2155 to protect the interests of landowners and the collaborative spirit necessary for effective wildlife management.

Thank you for your time.

Energy and Natural Resources Committee

Im giving testimony, opposing, SB2155.

I will use my 2024, antelope application, as example for my opposition.

Im a farm/ranch owner in Sioux Co, which is in antelope unit 6A. This is a big unit of approx. 3700 sq. miles. So there are a lot of landowners in this unit.

In 2024, I applied for the gratis license but did not get drawn. There were 100 tags, in that unit, and over 100 landowners applied. With the present setup, G&F gives 50% gratis tags. When there are more gratis apps than tags they allow another 50% of the number off apps over the original 50% mark but the landowners have to go into a lottery against each other. So they gave 75 gratis tags of the 100 available. Since there was more landowners, than tags, we had to go into a lottery against each other. Hence the reason I did not get drawn.

SB2155 will make it even harder for landowners to get a license. This bill wants to reduce the number to a straight 50% of the number of buck tags. So in 6A, over half of the landowners, that applied, would not have gotten a tag. (25% more than in 2024)

I believe the G&F use the same system for deer but its not an issue there as there are a lot more tags offered, so the amount of landowners applying never get to 50%.

Antelope numbers are a lot lower but making a comeback. I would have to say that landowners have more to do with this than anyone.

If antelope numbers go up this whole issue goes away when 50% of the tag number is more than the number of gratis applications. (as it is with deer already)

FYI- The Standing Rock Reservation is also inside this unit. In 2024 the SR G&F put out over 200 tags for the reservation. The Standing Rock reservation is inside boundaries of 6A but only makes up 1/3 of the 6A unit. These 200 + tags are not considered in the ND G&F system.

I realize it is not easy for, non-landowners, to get an antelope tag when numbers are low. For example, my children, have been applying for over 6 years and still have never drawn a tag. I wouldn't even be on the same playing field, as them, as they have 6 years of preference points built up and I will be starting from scratch. At least with the gratis tag we are allowed to at least enjoy one tag on our land.

You hear all the time that G&F, and other groups, are trying to improve landowner-hunter relationships. This bill will do the opposite. What incentive is there for a landowner, who hunts, to let others hunt a species, on his land, that he is not able to hunt himself.

Passing this bill will close gates.

Joe Maher

Farm/Ranch owner Sioux Co.

Antelope hunting opportunities are extremely limited. While I support landowners ability to draw tags to hunt their own land, I feel that they are given far too many tags for such a limited public resource. Please consider passing this bill and give other North Dakota hunters more opportunity.

SB 2155

North Dakota Bowhunters Association

The North Dakota Bowhunters Association certainly supports the Landowner – free of charge (gratis) program. In the case of Pronghorn, its simply time for an update.

The current language being used to provide the Pronghorn landowner opportunity is very outdated. When Pronghorn numbers were high, landowners, non-landowners, and Archers, all enjoyed hunting for one of these fine animals. Drawing a tag was relatively easy and animals were plentiful. Since about 2009, Pronghorn numbers have been much lower and the numbers we have now seem to be staying consistent. For the non-landowner, drawing a Pronghorn tag these days is next to a once in a lifetime opportunity. In most hunting units, Landowner tags simply outnumber and use up all of the available allotment, leaving very few, if any, for the average sportsman. It could take 10 to 15 years for a non-landowner to draw a Pronghorn tag in North Dakota.

SB 2155 is aimed at updating and providing an equal opportunity to both the landowner as well as the sportsman. Right now is a good time to make a change and we encourage you to agree.

Please help us support SB 2155

Sincerely,

Darrell Belisle

NDBA Government and Conservation

Support for SB2155

Hello. My name is Adam Miller and I am writing in support of SB2155 or at least a change in the pronghorn tag allocation. It's no secret that there is an ever growing increase in the demand for big game tags with big game numbers not being able to meet that demand. With the current system, in Morton County for example (pronghorn unit 11-A) there's not even enough tags to allocate to all the landowners that would like one. The general public is almost completely shut out of the allocation process. As it stands, only a few people are happy with the process with the much larger majority being disappointed. If the proposed solution of SB2155 isn't the answer, I would suggest at least something change to allow more people to get tags periodically than allowing only a select few get tags every year.

Adam Miller
ND Resident and outdoorsman

Matthew Gross
Dickinson, North Dakota
01-21-25

Members of the North Dakota Senate,

Dear Members of the Senate,

I am writing to express my strong support for SD 2155. The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation that North Dakota bases its pronghorn management on, states that wildlife be allocated by democratic rule of law. I believe all citizens should have equal access to our state's resources. This bill is a crucial step in preserving the balance of democratic allocation of tags and rewarding private landowners for maintaining wildlife friendly habitat.

There were 20 pronghorn units open to hunting in the 2024-2025 hunting season. There were eleven of these 20 units that had over 50% gratis license reductions. Reducing the number of gratis licenses will greatly open opportunities for the public and still all landowners the opportunity to hunt more frequently than any other citizen in the state.

I urge you to support SD 2155, as it will contribute to the continued success of North Dakota's wildlife preservation efforts and help maintain the integrity of our hunting traditions.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Matthew Gross

Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Public Hearing
SB 2155

I am writing in support of SB 2155, the Pronghorn bill as it relates to allocation of yearly licenses for pronghorn. This legislation would provide equity for all who apply in the annual lottery. The legislation would provide many additional opportunities for citizens to potentially draw a pronghorn license.

Please vote YES on SB 2155.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Rick Nelson
Bismarck, ND

25.0379.02001
Title.

Prepared by the Legislative Council
staff for Senator Cleary
January 21, 2025

Sixty-ninth
Legislative Assembly
of North Dakota

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO

SENATE BILL NO. 2155

Introduced by

Senators Cleary, Bekkedahl

Representatives Bosch, Steiner

- 1 A BILL for an Act to amend and reenact subsection 5 of section 20.1-03-11 of the North Dakota
2 Century Code, relating to gratis antelope licenses.

3 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:**

- 4 **SECTION 1. AMENDMENT.** Subsection 5 of section 20.1-03-11 of the North Dakota
5 Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

- 6 5. a. A resident that is an individual, corporation, limited liability company, limited
7 liability partnership, limited partnership, partnership, trust, or life estate, and has
8 executed a lease for at least one hundred fifty acres [60.70 hectares] of land that
9 the resident actively farms or ranches; or a resident that is an individual,
10 corporation, limited liability company, limited liability partnership, limited
11 partnership, partnership, trust, or life estate, and holds title to at least one
12 hundred fifty acres [60.70 hectares] of land, is eligible to submit one application
13 for a license to hunt antelope without charge upon filing a signed application
14 describing that land. The land must be within a unit open for the hunting of
15 antelope. The license must include a legal description of the eligible land
16 described in the completed application and may be used to hunt antelope only
17 upon that land. Upon request, a lessee shall provide proof that the land described
18 in the completed application is leased for agricultural purposes. If not otherwise
19 specified in an agricultural lease, the landowner is entitled to receive the license.
20 An individual licensed under this subsection must be a resident.

- 1 b. If the eligible applicant is a corporation, limited liability company, limited liability
2 partnership, limited partnership, partnership, trust, or life estate, only one license
3 may be issued, and the license must be issued in the name of an individual
4 shareholder, member, partner, beneficiary, or holder of a life estate.
- 5 c. A resident who is eligible for a license under this subsection may transfer that
6 eligibility for the license to a spouse or legal dependent residing customarily with
7 the resident, but no more than one license may be issued under this subsection
8 for any qualifying land. A resident transferring eligibility under this subsection may
9 not receive a license under this subsection for the season for which eligibility was
10 transferred. If not otherwise specified in an agricultural lease, the landowner is
11 entitled to receive the license.
- 12 d. The number of licenses issued without charge under this subsection may not
13 exceed ~~the total number~~ one-half of ~~buck~~ the number of licenses of any pronghorn
14 license type prescribed for each district or unit in the governor's proclamation. If
15 the number of eligible persons who apply for licenses issued without charge
16 under this subsection exceeds the number of licenses prescribed for the district
17 or unit in the governor's proclamation less any licenses that are otherwise
18 designated to be issued with a charge under this subsection, the licenses to be
19 issued without charge must be issued by lottery as prescribed in the governor's
20 proclamation. ~~If the number of licenses prescribed for the district or unit in the~~
21 ~~governor's proclamation exceeds fifty and if the number of applications for these~~
22 ~~licenses exceeds the number of licenses prescribed for the district or unit in the~~
23 ~~governor's proclamation, then one-half of the licenses exceeding fifty must be~~
24 ~~issued by lottery as prescribed in the governor's proclamation and may not be~~
25 ~~issued to landowners without charge.~~

To: Chair Patten and Members of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
From: Senator Sean Cleary, District 35 — Bismarck, Bill Sponsor
Date: 1/23/2025
Subject: Testimony in Support of SB 2155

Dear Chair Patten and Members of the Committee:

I am here to present SB 2155 for your favorable consideration.

Purpose of the Bill - This bill seeks to amend state law to ensure a more equitable distribution of pronghorn hunting licenses between landowner (gratis) hunters and non-landowner hunters.

Current Law and Issues—Under the current system, the first 50 of any pronghorn license type in each unit are reserved exclusively for gratis hunters, with the remaining licenses split evenly. This has resulted in some units only allocating 5% of the licenses to non-landowners, making it a decade-long wait for someone who doesn't own land to be selected for a license.

Proposed Changes - This bill would establish a consistent 50/50 allocation of buck pronghorn licenses between landowner and non-landowner hunters.

Anticipated Impact—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 non-landowner hunters, but this change will result in a more even distribution. Additional testimony from supporters of the bill will highlight other data about how this will impact North Dakota hunters.

Amendment - Included is an amendment to clarify that this bill does not eliminate the lottery system for licenses. I support this amendment and believe it provides important clarification.

Thank you for considering this legislation. **I respectfully ask for a "Do-Pass" recommendation.** I am available to provide additional information or answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Sean Cleary
State Senator
District 35 -- Bismarck
C: (701) 426-4618

Dear Member of the Energy & Natural resources committee,

My name is Pat Weninger, I am an avid sportsman and lifelong resident. I am writing today in favor of SB 2155. I believe this strikes a fair compromise between landowners and the public for available tags. Both private and public have rights to this argument. This may not be a one size fits all but 50/50 split in my view point gets close.

Wildlife should be managed by the rule of law as it is a public resource and as such should be enjoyed by all ND residents. Understandably some of these conversations are hard to have or change is hard to adjust to.

I ask you to consider a do pass for this bill, or at least change for a fair compromise.

Thank you for your valuable time,

Pat Weninger

My name is Kent Reiersen from Williston, ND. I am writing in support of SB2155. This legislation would improve the fairness of antelope tag allocation. This is simply a matter of correcting an inequitable situation that has developed due to decreasing antelope numbers and tags. Hopefully, numbers will continue to increase as they have for the past several years due to the milder winters. This Bill will create slightly more equal access to a public resource. When antelope numbers were higher and there were more tags this allocation was not such an issue. While the system was still highly weighted in favor of the landowner it did not lock non landowners, the majority of the antelope tag applicants, out of possibly drawing a tag.

While landowner relations are extremely important, so is basic fairness in allocating a public resource. No one can look at the current system and believe it is a fair allocation. In some units, landowners can get a tag every year, gratis, and receive the bulk of the allocation. In western ND many of the antelope are on public land and the public cannot draw a tag to access that resource.

It has been over a decade since I was able to draw a tag as I have 11 points. Being 70 years old now, I hope it is not another decade before I am able to draw a tag.

The adoption of the provisions in this bill, will still weigh heavily in favor of the landowner and that is acceptable to the majority of non-landowner sportsmen. But it will at least give non-landowner applicants a more equitable chance at some of the tags. I hope you can see the unfairness of the present allocation and take some steps to reduce the inequity of the current allocation by passing this bill.

Thank you.

I am in favor of SB 2155 and encourage a Yay vote on this bill. This bill would more fairly and evenly distribute pronghorn tags/licenses

As pronghorn and all wildlife are a public asset to all people of North Dakota, SB 2155 would allow more North Dakota residents access to this public resource.

I encourage you to approve SB 2155.

Josh G.

Grand Forks, ND

Testimony in favor and support of SB2155 – Relating to Gratis Antelope Licenses

My name is Steve Goroski, and I am a long-time North Dakota resident, avid sportsman, bowhunter and conservationist of ND for almost 50 years. I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 2155, which would restore equitable fairness of the pronghorn antelope lottery process by the ND Game and Fish.

Back around 2009 the bowhunters of North Dakota had to give up the opportunity at an archery only tag available each year after a serious decline in numbers across the state. We were accepting of this change due to the lower number of animals found on the landscape and remains the same 15 years later. The bowhunters ultimately had a much lower success and did not impact the overall harvest by rifle hunters.

The current lottery process for gratis applications has been around longer than anyone currently at the ND Game and Fish can remember why it was even set to the current format. While I respect the rights of landowners to receive tags, it is essential to ensure that public hunters have equitable access to pronghorn hunting opportunities.

By eliminating the preferential allocation of the first 50 tags to landowners and establishing a straight 50/50 split, this bill would return some fairness back to the lottery process. I believe this bill strikes a fair balance between landowner privileges and public hunting opportunities. While also allowing the ND Game and Fish to further open additional areas of opportunity that may have fewer than 50 licenses available allowing the public a chance at drawing a tag and not just for those eligible for a gratis opportunity.

I was able to draw my last tag after 16 years of applying and fully expect my next tag to take over 20 years if I am even still around or capable of enjoying the experience once again. I appreciate you taking the time to read this testimony and hope that you will consider 'change' for the future of SB 2155.

I urge you to support SB2155 with a DO PASS from the committee.

Sincerely,

Steve Goroski

Testimony in favor and support of SB2155 – Relating to Gratis Antelope Licenses

My Name is Blake Amon, and I am a lifelong resident of North Dakota. I urge you to please support and DO PASS SB2155. The current structure completely favors landowners and leaves very minimal opportunities to the public. North Dakota Antelope are a public resource and the distribution of tags to the residents of this state should be fair to all of us through the lottery. This bill addresses that issue. Please DO PASS.

Sincerely,

Blake Amon



**BACKCOUNTRY
HUNTERS & ANGLERS**
NORTH DAKOTA

**TESTIMONY OF BROCK WAHL
NORTH DAKOTA BACKCOUNTRY HUNTERS AND ANGLERS
SENATE BILL 2155
SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCE COMMITTEE
January 23, 2025**

Chairman Patten and members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resource Committee

The North Dakota Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers asks for a “Do Pass” recommendation on SB 2155.

Currently, North Dakota Century Code dictates that the first 50 tags in each unit are required to go to gratis tags, with remaining tags allocated as 50/50 split. In some units, this has resulted in 95% of the “any pronghorn” tags being allocated as gratis tags. Several other units can see 60-70% or more of those same tags go to gratis.

This is purely a function of the number of tags available. If pronghorn numbers were significantly higher, then this entire conversation would be irrelevant. However, pronghorn numbers are down significantly across the entire country due to many factors. With that being said, it is our stance that the current tag allocation system is not representative of a fair distribution of tags for North Dakota’s pronghorn resource.

Senate Bill 2155 seeks to balance the scales of Pronghorn tag allocation by codifying a straight 50/50 split for the tag type “any pronghorn”. In 2024, this bill would’ve meant that 172 “any pronghorn” tags went into the hands of the resident North Dakotans who have waited, in most cases, over a decade for that hunting opportunity. North Dakota resident hunters, who all own an equal share of North Dakota’s wildlife, deserve a fair distribution of tags on a limited public resource.

After all, it is written in North Dakota Century code Section 20.1-03-03,
“The ownership of and title to all wildlife within this state is in the state for the purpose of regulating the enjoyment, use, possession, disposition, and conservation thereof...” and “The state has a property interest in all protected wildlife.”

We support the amendments and urge a “Do Pass” to the committee.

Brock Wahl
Chairman
Board of Directors
North Dakota Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers

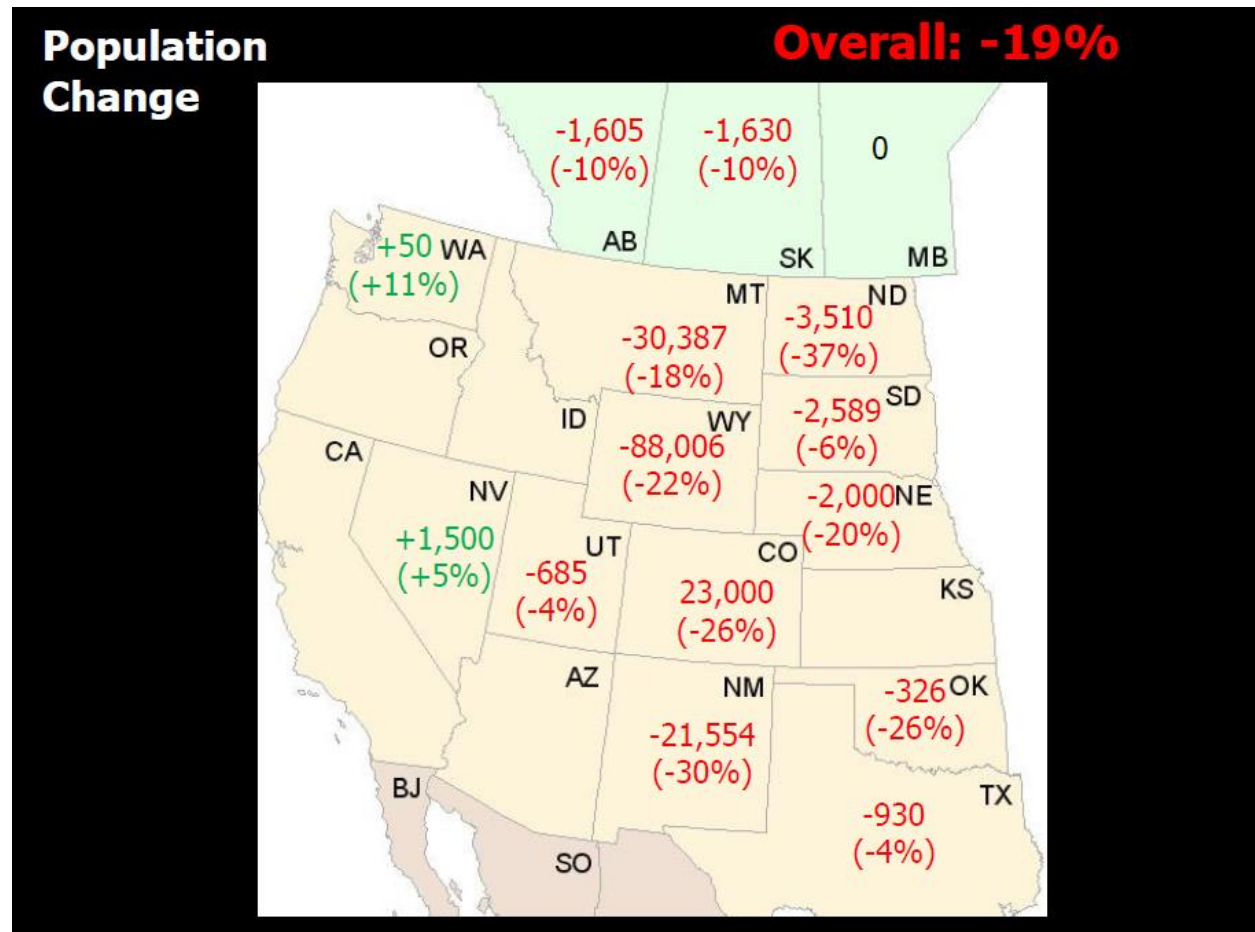


2024									
Unit	Any license	doe fawn	Gratis	public	public doe fawn	Total Tags	gratis percentage of buck	50/50 split additive to public draw	SB 2155 - 50/50 split
1A	120	25	62	58	25	145	52%	2	60
1D	150	25	38	112	25	175	25%	No Change	75
2A	60		33	27		60	55%	3	30
2B	50		19	31		50	38%	No Change	25
3A	25		4	21		25	16%	No Change	12.5
3B	70	15	42	28	15	85	60%	7	35
4A	75		53	22		75	71%	15.5	37.5
4C	55		18	37		55	33%	No Change	27.5
5A	60		48	12		60	80%	18	30
6A	100		75	25		100	75%	25	50
7A	85		67	18		85	79%	24.5	42.5
8A	55		52	3		55	95%	24.5	27.5
9A	40		24	16		40	60%	4	20
9C	55		52	3		55	95%	24.5	27.5
10A	60		22	38		60	37%	No Change	30
11A	75		62	13		75	83%	24.5	37.5
13A	60		29	31		60	48%	No Change	30
Totals	1195	65	700	495	65	1260	59%	172.5	
								30% increase to public draw	
						50-70% of tags			
						71-90% of tags			
						over 91% of tags			

2023									
Unit	Any license	doe fawn	Gratis	public	public doe fawn	total tags	gratis percentage of total buck	50/50 split additive to public	SB 2155 - 50/50 split
1A						0		0	0
1D						0		0	0
2A	50		39	11		50	78%	14	25
2B	30		15	15		30	50%	0	15
3A	15					15	0%	7.5	7.5
3B	70		42	28		70	60%	7	35
4A	75		51	24		75	68%	13.5	37.5
4C	50		24	26		50	48%	-1	25
5A	60		43	17		60	72%	13	30
6A						0		0	0
7A	65		57	8		65	88%	24.5	32.5
8A						0		0	0
9A						0		0	0
9C						0		0	0
10A						0		0	0
11A						0		0	0
13A						0		0	0
Totals	415	0	271	129	0	415	65%	78.5	
								60% increase to public draw	
						50-70% of tags			
						71-90% of tags			
						over 91% of tags			



Population change from 2021-2023



Legislators of North Dakota,

I am writing this testimony in opposition of SB 2137. No matter which way one feels about how CWD affects or could affect North Dakotas deer herd, allowing game and fish regulations to be put in place via disgruntled public input almost guarantees our states wildlife loses. Weve seen in other states how emotional decisions have thrown wildlife management awry when popular vote overrides professional opinion (predators overpopulated ect.), I believe there is a better more common sense way forward here.

John Torfin
Mandan, ND

Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee,

I am writing today to express my support for SB2155 and encourage you to give this bill a "*Do Pass*" recommendation.

Hunting pronghorn in North Dakota is a highly sought after experience with demand (unfortunately) outweighing supply. Many non-landowners will wait 10 years or more to draw a license allowing them to hunt a buck antelope while some landowners are able to draw one annually. With pronghorn populations low and license demand high, the current gratis system needs to be amended. SB2155 is a good start to that process.

The current system allows the first 50 buck licenses to be allocated to landowners owning land in the hunting unit. Due to consistently low pronghorn populations, several units see more licenses go to landowners than non-landowning applicants, despite a majority of applications coming from non-landowners. This bill will not eliminate opportunities for landowners to have licenses allocated to them. Rather, it will make the number of landowner tags equal to 50% of the total buck tags allocated in that unit.

Thank you for considering my testimony and please give SB2155 a "*Do Pass*" recommendation.

Joseph Doll
Bismarck, ND

Dear Members of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee,

I am writing in strong support of SB 2155 regarding pronghorn, or antelope, gratis tag allocations. The current allocation method is not an equitable distribution of a public resource, particularly due to the limited tags available. Both landowners and the public need to be considered when considering gratis tag distributions. Private landowners have to deal with wildlife year round at an expense to them. In addition, in most cases they are providing the access needed to allow the public to hunt. At the same time, wildlife are a public resource. The proper distribution of tags can be extremely subjective, but I do think the current antelope distribution needs adjustment.

The current allocation allows landowners to receive the first 50 tags and then 50 percent of the remaining. SB 2155 would result in the gratis allocation being capped at a straight 50 percent, which is in line with the deer gratis allocation. Due to antelope in North Dakota being on the edge of their range, we will never have huge populations and they will always be subject to population swings from harsh winters. Antelope fall well short of the tag availability of deer. Instead they lie somewhere between deer and the once in a lifetime tags of elk and moose. The latter only allow for 15 percent of the tags to be allocated to gratis. I do not see a reason why antelope would have the highest tag percentage of gratis tag allocation for any of the big game animals in the state.

Unit tag availability for antelope is often under 100 in most units of the state. Gratis tags frequently end up taking a large majority of the tags available. For example, in unit 8A and 9A last year, there were 55 tags available in each. Due to the current allocation, 52 of the 55 tags went to gratis. The remaining three tags had 259 and 446 North Dakota residents applying for them. High percentages of tags going to gratis occurred in multiple other units last year and happens every year. I believe most of the general public are unaware of how few tags they are really vying for.

Now is the time to adjust the antelope gratis tag allocation to bring it in line with the deer drawing and give the general public a better opportunity to hunt.

Sincerely,

Greg Morel

TESTIMONY OF JOHN BRADLEY
NORTH DAKOTA WILDLIFE FEDERATION
SENATE BILL 2155
SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE
JANUARY 23, 2025

Chairman Patten and Members of the Senate 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 and the amendment language that was introduced.

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.

We respectfully ask for a Do-Pass recommendation.

SB 2155 Information

Casey Anderson - Wildlife Division Chief, North Dakota Game and Fish Department

TABLE 1. Lottery information and license distribution summarized by hunting unit, application type, and pronghorn type for the 2024 pronghorn hunting season.

HUNTING UNIT	APPL. TYPE	LIC. TYPE	LIC. AVAILABLE	NO. APPLICANTS	LIC. ISSUED
01A	Gratis	Any	0	62	62
01A	Lottery	Any	120	2,428	58
01A	Lottery	Doe/Fawn	25	84	25
01D	Gratis	Any	0	38	38
01D	Lottery	Any	150	2,173	111
01D	Lottery	Doe/Fawn	25	60	25
02A	Gratis	Any	0	33	33
02A	Lottery	Any	60	721	27
02B	Gratis	Any	0	19	19
02B	Lottery	Any	50	951	31
03A	Gratis	Any	0	4	4
03A	Lottery	Any	25	302	21
03B	Gratis	Any	0	42	42
03B	Lottery	Any	70	1,007	27
03B	Lottery	Doe/Fawn	15	27	15
04A	Gratis	Any	0	54	54
04A	Lottery	Any	75	1,626	22
04C	Gratis	Any	0	18	18
04C	Lottery	Any	55	348	37
05A	Gratis	Any	0	48	48
05A	Lottery	Any	60	483	12
06A	Gratis	Any	0	105	75
06A	Lottery	Any	100	707	25
07A	Gratis	Any	0	72	67
07A	Lottery	Any	85	567	18
08A	Gratis	Any	0	56	52
08A	Lottery	Any	55	259	3
09A	Gratis	Any	0	24	24
09A	Lottery	Any	40	180	16
09C	Gratis	Any	0	76	52
09C	Lottery	Any	55	446	3
10A	Gratis	Any	0	22	22
10A	Lottery	Any	60	259	38
11A	Gratis	Any	0	113	62
11A	Lottery	Any	75	616	13
13A	Gratis	Any	0	29	29
13A	Lottery	Any	60	843	31
Statewide	Gratis	Any	0	815	701
Statewide	Lottery	Any	1,195	13,916	493
Statewide	Lottery	Doe/Fawn	65	171	65
TOTAL			1,260	14,902	1,259

SB 2155 Information

Casey Anderson - Wildlife Division Chief, North Dakota Game and Fish Department

TABLE 2. Estimates of pronghorn hunting activity summarized by hunting unit, application type, and pronghorn type for the 2024 season.

HUNTING UNIT	APPL. TYPE	LIC. TYPE	LIC. ISSUED	NO. HUNTERS	DID NOT HUNT	TOT. HUNT DAYS	AVG. HUNT DAYS	TOT. HARVEST	95% CI	HUNTER SUCCESS (%)
01A	Gratis	Any	62	39	23	117	3.00	24	18-30	61.5
01A	Lottery	Any	58	56	2	162	2.90	52	50-54	92.9
01A	Lottery	Doe/Fawn	25	25	0	47	1.90	22	20-24	88.0
01D	Gratis	Any	38	24	14	80	3.30	11	5-17	45.8
01D	Lottery	Any	111	105	6	285	2.70	95	92-98	90.5
01D	Lottery	Doe/Fawn	25	23	2	51	2.20	18	15-21	78.3
02A	Gratis	Any	33	20	13	58	2.90	12	5-19	60.0
02A	Lottery	Any	27	25	2	61	2.40	21	19-23	84.0
02B	Gratis	Any	19	16	3	71	4.40	7	2-12	43.8
02B	Lottery	Any	31	31	0	63	2.00	28	26-30	90.3
03A	Gratis	Any	4	1	3	3	3.00	0	0-0	0.0
03A	Lottery	Any	21	19	2	69	3.60	13	11-15	68.4
03B	Gratis	Any	42	25	17	86	3.40	7	1-13	28.0
03B	Lottery	Any	27	24	3	50	2.10	20	18-22	83.3
03B	Lottery	Doe/Fawn	15	13	2	31	2.40	11	10-12	84.6
04A	Gratis	Any	54	31	23	100	3.20	14	6-22	45.2
04A	Lottery	Any	22	22	0	38	1.70	16	13-19	72.7
04C	Gratis	Any	18	9	9	34	3.80	4	1-7	44.4
04C	Lottery	Any	37	32	5	98	3.10	27	24-30	84.4
05A	Gratis	Any	48	38	10	117	3.10	18	13-23	47.4
05A	Lottery	Any	12	12	0	25	2.10	10	8-12	83.3
06A	Gratis	Any	75	60	15	228	3.80	32	24-40	53.3
06A	Lottery	Any	25	23	2	48	2.10	20	17-23	87.0
07A	Gratis	Any	67	45	22	121	2.70	23	16-30	51.1
07A	Lottery	Any	18	18	0	38	2.10	16	15-17	88.9
08A	Gratis	Any	52	36	16	150	4.20	15	10-20	41.7
08A	Lottery	Any	3	3	0	4	1.30	3	3-3	100.0
09A	Gratis	Any	24	14	10	84	6.00	4	1-7	28.6

SB 2155 Information

Casey Anderson - Wildlife Division Chief, North Dakota Game and Fish Department

TABLE 2. Estimates of pronghorn hunting activity summarized by hunting unit, application type, and pronghorn type for the 2024 season.										
HUNTING UNIT	APPL. TYPE	LIC. TYPE	LIC. ISSUED	NO. HUNTERS	DID NOT HUNT	TOT. HUNT DAYS	AVG. HUNT DAYS	TOT. HARVEST	95% CI	HUNTER SUCCESS (%)
09A	Lottery	Any	16	12	4	24	2.00	12	9-15	100.0
09C	Gratis	Any	52	44	8	134	3.00	30	24-36	68.2
09C	Lottery	Any	3	3	0	20	6.70	3	3-3	100.0
10A	Gratis	Any	22	13	9	61	4.70	5	2-8	38.5
10A	Lottery	Any	38	36	2	95	2.60	33	30-36	91.7
11A	Gratis	Any	62	55	7	314	5.70	24	16-32	43.6
11A	Lottery	Any	13	13	0	21	1.60	11	10-12	84.6
13A	Gratis	Any	29	25	4	87	3.50	13	8-18	52.0
13A	Lottery	Any	31	29	2	94	3.20	26	23-29	89.7
Statewide	Gratis	Any	701	495	206	1,845	3.70	243	220-266	49.1
Statewide	Lottery	Any	493	463	30	1,195	2.60	406	397-415	87.7
Statewide	Lottery	Doe/Fawn	65	61	4	129	2.10	51	47-55	83.6
TOTAL			1,259	1,019	240	3,169	3.10	700	674-726	68.7

2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Energy and Natural Resources Committee

Peace Garden Room, State Capitol

SB 2155

1/23/2025

Relating to gratis antelope licenses.

11:04 a.m. Chairman Patten opened the hearing.

Members present:

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

Discussion Topics:

- Landowner hunting rights
- Antelope hunting opportunities
- License application processes
- Land purchase motivations

11:04 a.m. Chairman Patten led committee discussion on antelope bill.

11:17 a.m. Chairman Patten closed the hearing.

Kendra McCann, Committee Clerk

2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Energy and Natural Resources Committee

Peace Garden Room, State Capitol

SB 2155

1/24/2025

Relating to gratis antelope licenses.

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

Members present:

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

Discussion Topics:

- Landowners licensing lotteries
- Feeding antelope
- Competition buying land
- Pronghorn license

9:03 a.m. Senator Gerhardt introduced proposed amendment and submitted testimony #38405.

9:07 a.m. Senator Gerhardt moved amendment LC# 25.0379.02002.

9:07 a.m. Senator Van Oosting seconded.

Senators	Vote
Senator Dale Patten	Y
Senator Greg Kessel	N
Senator Todd Beard	Y
Senator Keith Boehm	Y
Senator Mark Enget	Y
Senator Justin Gerhardt	Y
Senator Desiree Van Oosting	Y

Motion Passed 6-1-0.

9:13 a.m. Senator Boehm moved a Do Not Pass as amended.

9:13 a.m. Senator Kessel seconded.

Senators	Vote
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.

9:13 a.m. Senator Boehm will carry the bill.

11:14 a.m. Chairman Patten closed the hearing.

Kendra McCann, Committee Clerk

RS 1/24/25

1 of 2

Sixty-ninth
Legislative Assembly
of North Dakota

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO

SENATE BILL NO. 2155

Introduced by

Senators Cleary, Bekkedahl

Representatives Bosch, Steiner

- 1 A BILL for an Act to amend and reenact subsection 5 of section 20.1-03-11 of the North Dakota
2 Century Code, relating to gratis antelope licenses.

3 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:**

- 4 **SECTION 1. AMENDMENT.** Subsection 5 of section 20.1-03-11 of the North Dakota
5 Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

- 6 5. a. A resident that is an individual, corporation, limited liability company, limited
7 liability partnership, limited partnership, partnership, trust, or life estate, and has
8 executed a lease for at least one hundred fifty acres [60.70 hectares] of land that
9 the resident actively farms or ranches; or a resident that is an individual,
10 corporation, limited liability company, limited liability partnership, limited
11 partnership, partnership, trust, or life estate, and holds title to at least one
12 hundred fifty acres [60.70 hectares] of land, is eligible to submit one application
13 for a license to hunt antelope without charge upon filing a signed application
14 describing that land. The land must be within a unit open for the hunting of
15 antelope. The license must include a legal description of the eligible land
16 described in the completed application and may be used to hunt antelope only
17 upon that land. Upon request, a lessee shall provide proof that the land described
18 in the completed application is leased for agricultural purposes. If not otherwise
19 specified in an agricultural lease, the landowner is entitled to receive the license.
20 An individual licensed under this subsection must be a resident.

95
2 of 2

b. If the eligible applicant is a corporation, limited liability company, limited liability partnership, limited partnership, partnership, trust, or life estate, only one license may be issued, and the license must be issued in the name of an individual shareholder, member, partner, beneficiary, or holder of a life estate.

c. A resident who is eligible for a license under this subsection may transfer that eligibility for the license to a spouse or legal dependent residing customarily with the resident, but no more than one license may be issued under this subsection for any qualifying land. A resident transferring eligibility under this subsection may not receive a license under this subsection for the season for which eligibility was transferred. If not otherwise specified in an agricultural lease, the landowner is entitled to receive the license.

d. ~~The~~Except as provided in paragraph 2, the number of licenses issued without charge under this subsection may not exceed the total number one-half of
~~but~~the number of licenses of any pronghorn license type prescribed for each
district or unit in the governor's proclamation.

(1) If the number of eligible persons who apply for licenses issued without charge under this subsection exceeds the number of licenses prescribed for the district or unit in the governor's proclamation less any licenses that are otherwise designated to be issued with a charge under this subsection, the licenses to be issued without charge must be issued by lottery as prescribed in the governor's proclamation. ~~If the number of licenses prescribed for the district or unit in the governor's proclamation exceeds fifty and if the number of applications for these licenses exceeds the number of licenses prescribed for the district or unit in the governor's proclamation, then one-half of the licenses exceeding fifty must be issued by lottery as prescribed in the governor's proclamation and may not be issued to landowners without charge.~~

(2) If an eligible person is unsuccessful in receiving a license without charge under paragraph 1, the application for a license without charge must be included in a lottery for remaining licenses issued for the district or unit as prescribed by the governor's proclamation.

**REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE
SB 2155**

Energy and Natural Resources Committee (Sen. Patten, Chairman) recommends **AMENDMENTS** ([25.0379.02002](#)) and when so amended, recommends **DO NOT PASS** (7 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSENT OR EXCUSED AND NOT VOTING). SB 2155 was placed on the Sixth order on the calendar. This bill does not affect workforce development.

25.0379.02002
Title.03000

Prepared by the Legislative Council
staff for Senator Gerhardt
January 23, 2025

Sixty-ninth
Legislative Assembly
of North Dakota

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO

SENATE BILL NO. 2155

Introduced by

Senators Cleary, Bekkedahl

Representatives Bosch, Steiner

- 1 A BILL for an Act to amend and reenact subsection 5 of section 20.1-03-11 of the North Dakota
2 Century Code, relating to gratis antelope licenses.

3 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:**

- 4 **SECTION 1. AMENDMENT.** Subsection 5 of section 20.1-03-11 of the North Dakota
5 Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

- 6 5. a. A resident that is an individual, corporation, limited liability company, limited
7 liability partnership, limited partnership, partnership, trust, or life estate, and has
8 executed a lease for at least one hundred fifty acres [60.70 hectares] of land that
9 the resident actively farms or ranches; or a resident that is an individual,
10 corporation, limited liability company, limited liability partnership, limited
11 partnership, partnership, trust, or life estate, and holds title to at least one
12 hundred fifty acres [60.70 hectares] of land, is eligible to submit one application
13 for a license to hunt antelope without charge upon filing a signed application
14 describing that land. The land must be within a unit open for the hunting of
15 antelope. The license must include a legal description of the eligible land
16 described in the completed application and may be used to hunt antelope only
17 upon that land. Upon request, a lessee shall provide proof that the land described
18 in the completed application is leased for agricultural purposes. If not otherwise
19 specified in an agricultural lease, the landowner is entitled to receive the license.
20 An individual licensed under this subsection must be a resident.

- 1 b. If the eligible applicant is a corporation, limited liability company, limited liability
2 partnership, limited partnership, partnership, trust, or life estate, only one license
3 may be issued, and the license must be issued in the name of an individual
4 shareholder, member, partner, beneficiary, or holder of a life estate.
- 5 c. A resident who is eligible for a license under this subsection may transfer that
6 eligibility for the license to a spouse or legal dependent residing customarily with
7 the resident, but no more than one license may be issued under this subsection
8 for any qualifying land. A resident transferring eligibility under this subsection may
9 not receive a license under this subsection for the season for which eligibility was
10 transferred. If not otherwise specified in an agricultural lease, the landowner is
11 entitled to receive the license.
- 12 d. ~~The~~Except as provided in paragraph 2, the number of licenses issued without
13 charge under this subsection may not exceed ~~the total number~~one-half of
14 ~~buck~~the number of licenses of any pronghorn license type prescribed for each
15 district or unit in the governor's proclamation.

16 (1) If the number of eligible persons who apply for licenses issued without
17 charge under this subsection exceeds the number of licenses prescribed for
18 the district or unit in the governor's proclamation less any licenses that are
19 otherwise designated to be issued with a charge under this subsection, the
20 licenses to be issued without charge must be issued by lottery as prescribed
21 in the governor's proclamation. ~~If the number of licenses prescribed for the~~
22 ~~district or unit in the governor's proclamation exceeds fifty and if the number~~
23 ~~of applications for these licenses exceeds the number of licenses prescribed~~
24 ~~for the district or unit in the governor's proclamation, then one-half of the~~
25 ~~licenses exceeding fifty must be issued by lottery as prescribed in the~~
26 ~~governor's proclamation and may not be issued to landowners without~~
27 ~~charge.~~

28 (2) If an eligible person is unsuccessful in receiving a license without charge
29 under paragraph 1, the application for a license without charge must be
30 included in a lottery for remaining licenses issued for the district or unit as
31 prescribed by the governor's proclamation.

2025 HOUSE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

SB 2155

2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Energy and Natural Resources Committee

Coteau AB Room, State Capitol

SB 2155

3/7/2025

Relating to gratis antelope licenses.

8:44 a.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, Ruby,
Conmy, Foss

Discussion Topics:

- Limited gratis tags
- Landowner tags

8:44 a.m. Senator Cleary introduced the bill.

8:49 a.m. Brock Wahl, ND Chapter of Back Country Hunters and Anglers, testified in favor and submitted testimony. #39395

8:56 a.m. John Bradley, Executive Director, ND Wildlife Federation, testified in favor and submitted testimony. #39491

8:57 a.m. Casey Anderson, Wildlife Division Chief, ND Game and Fish Department, answered questions for the committee and handed out information. #39524

Additional written testimony:

#38512 #38515 #38523 #39081 #39086 #39194 #39288 #39401 #39403 #39411 #39414
#39438 #39446 #39457 #39463 #39513

9:04 a.m. Chairman Porter closed the hearing.

Leah Kuball, Committee Clerk

VOTE YES to SB2155. It is simple, wildlife are a public resource in the United States. We have no kings in this country who own the wildlife. We the people shall have the right to hunt. Make more pronghorn tags available to North Dakota residents. Landowners can apply for tags, just like the rest of us.

Support 2155

I support bill 2155. The current laws regarding antelope gratis tags are outdated and do not represent the current antelope population size and range. Game animals are held in public trust and should be available to all North Dakotans not just landowners.

Jeremy Stahowiak

I am writing in support of SB 2155.

The way the system is setup now, landowners receive tags nearly every year while the non-landowners commonly wait a decade or more to draw a pronghorn tag. While I fully support landowners getting a preference in tags, I believe that SB 2155 would distribute tags much more fairly and in my opinion, is very reasonable.

Please vote in favor of SB 2155.

Respectfully,

Vince Gray
Bismarck

To members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee

On SB 2155. I would respectfully ask you for a Do-Pass recommendation on the Pronghorn Licensing Bill. This being done for the future of our State and future generations of North Dakotans.

Thank You Do-Pass

Ryan Bauer

I'm writing to you today in support of SB 2155. I believe this bill to be the fairest distribution of a public resource. I'll use my own 2024 pronghorn application as an example. I received a North Dakota pronghorn tag last year for the first time in my life. I've been applying for this tag since 2014. I had to wait ten years to acquire this tag while the current system allows the same people, year after year, to receive this tag for a public resource. I respect and am grateful for what landowners do for the states wildlife and

**believe that those individuals
will still be successful tag
recipients on an every other
year basis while the herd
numbers are on the lower trend.
Thank you for your
consideration.**

Kent Slaughter

SB2155

I am asking for a DO PASS on SB2155. As a public trust resource a fair and equal opportunity to pursue and harvest wild game should exist between all sportsmen and women of North Dakota.

I am asking for you to provide a DO PASS on SB2155.

Rachel Bush

House Energy and Natural Resources Committee - Testimony in support of SB2155 Relating to Gratis Antelope Licenses

Chairman Porter and members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee. My name is Steve Goroski, and I am a long-time North Dakota resident, avid sportsman, bowhunter and conservationist of ND for almost 50 years. I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 2155, which would restore equitable fairness of the pronghorn antelope lottery process by the ND Game and Fish.

Back around 2009 the bowhunters of North Dakota had to give up the opportunity at an archery only tag available each year after a serious decline in numbers across the state. We were accepting of this change due to the lower number of animals found on the landscape and remains the same 15 years later. The bowhunters ultimately had a much lower success and did not impact the overall harvest by rifle hunters.

The current lottery process for gratis applications has been around longer than anyone currently at the ND Game and Fish can remember why it was even set to the current format. While I respect the rights of landowners to receive tags, it is essential to ensure that public hunters have equitable access to pronghorn hunting opportunities.

By eliminating the preferential allocation of the first 50 tags to landowners and establishing a straight 50/50 split, this bill would return some fairness back to the lottery process. I believe this bill strikes a fair balance between landowner privileges and public hunting opportunities. While also allowing the ND Game and Fish to further open additional areas of opportunity that may have fewer than 50 licenses available allowing the public a chance at drawing a tag and not just for those eligible for a gratis opportunity.

I was able to draw my last tag after 16 years of applying and fully expect my next tag to take over 20 years if I am even still around or capable of enjoying the experience once again. I appreciate you taking the time to read this testimony and hope that you will consider 'change' for the future of SB 2155.

I urge you to support SB2155 with a DO PASS from the committee.

Sincerely,

Steve Goroski

1018 W. Owens Ave.
Bismarck, ND 58501
701-391-2665



**BACKCOUNTRY
HUNTERS & ANGLERS**
NORTH DAKOTA

TESTIMONY OF BROCK WAHL
NORTH DAKOTA BACKCOUNTRY HUNTERS AND ANGLERS
SENATE BILL 2155
HOUSE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCE COMMITTEE
March 7, 2025

Chairman Porter and members of the House Energy and Natural Resource Committee

The North Dakota Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers asks for a “Do Pass” recommendation on SB 2155.

Currently, North Dakota Century Code dictates that the first 50 tags in each unit are required to go to gratis tags, with remaining tags allocated as 50/50 split. In some units, this has resulted in 95% of the “any pronghorn” tags being allocated as gratis tags. Several other units can see 60-70% or more of those same tags go to gratis.

This is purely a function of the number of tags available. If pronghorn numbers were significantly higher, then this entire conversation would be irrelevant. However, pronghorn numbers are down significantly across the entire country due to many factors. With that being said, it is our stance that the current tag allocation system is not representative of a fair distribution of tags for North Dakota’s pronghorn resource.

Senate Bill 2155 seeks to balance the scales of Pronghorn tag allocation by codifying a straight 50/50 split for the tag type “any pronghorn”. In 2024, this bill would’ve meant that 172 “any pronghorn” tags went into the hands of the resident North Dakotans who have waited, in most cases, over a decade for that hunting opportunity. North Dakota resident hunters, who all own an equal share of North Dakota’s wildlife, deserve a fair distribution of tags on a limited public resource.

After all, it is written in North Dakota Century code Section 20.1-03-03,
“The ownership of and title to all wildlife within this state is in the state for the purpose of regulating the enjoyment, use, possession, disposition, and conservation thereof...” and “The state has a property interest in all protected wildlife.”

We support the amendment and urge a “Do Pass” to the committee.

Brock Wahl
Chairman
Board of Directors
North Dakota Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers

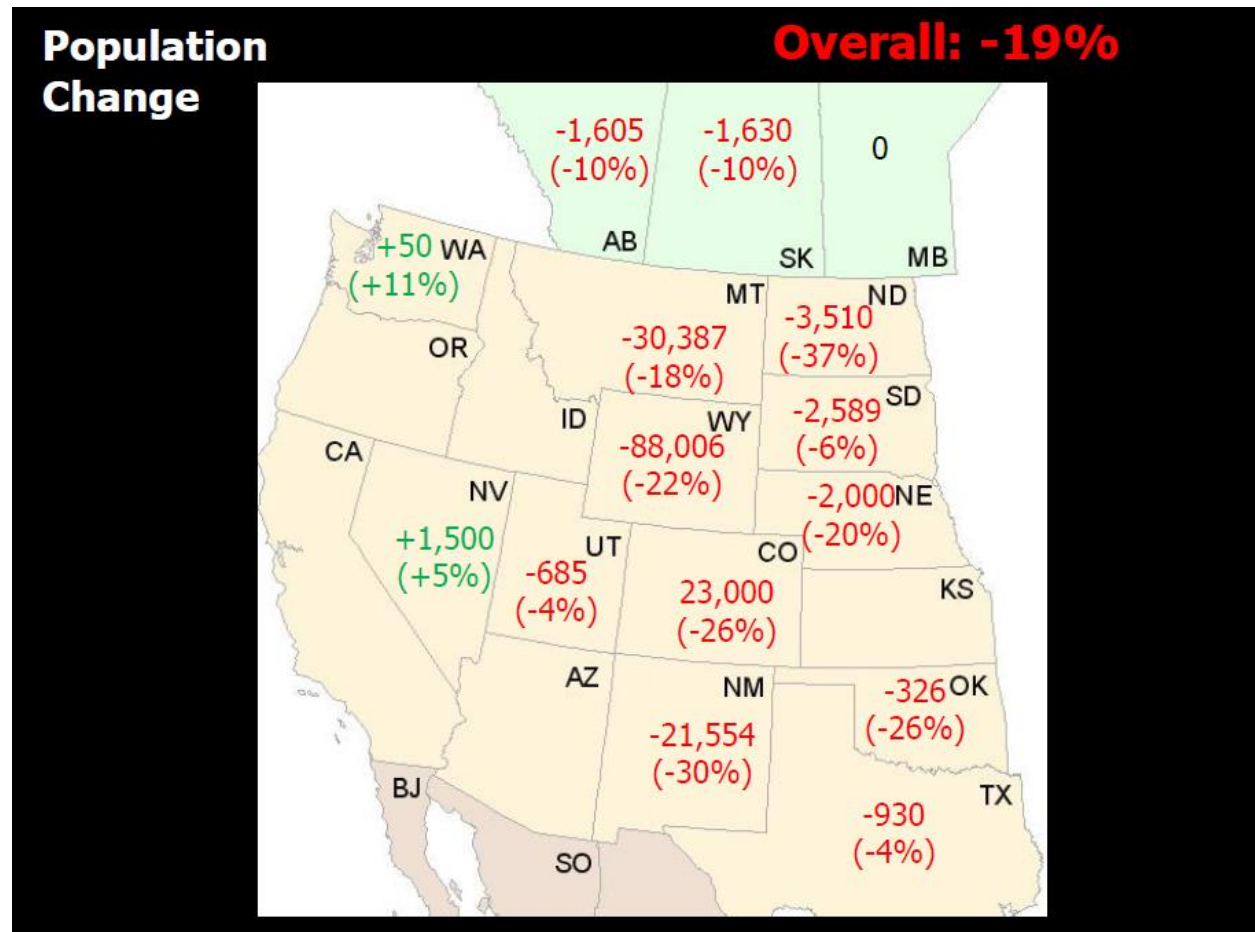


2024									
Unit	Any license	doe fawn	Gratis	public	public doe fawn	Total Tags	gratis percentage of buck	50/50 split additive to public draw	SB 2155 - 50/50 split
1A	120	25	62	58	25	145	52%	2	60
1D	150	25	38	112	25	175	25%	No Change	75
2A	60		33	27		60	55%	3	30
2B	50		19	31		50	38%	No Change	25
3A	25		4	21		25	16%	No Change	12.5
3B	70	15	42	28	15	85	60%	7	35
4A	75		53	22		75	71%	15.5	37.5
4C	55		18	37		55	33%	No Change	27.5
5A	60		48	12		60	80%	18	30
6A	100		75	25		100	75%	25	50
7A	85		67	18		85	79%	24.5	42.5
8A	55		52	3		55	95%	24.5	27.5
9A	40		24	16		40	60%	4	20
9C	55		52	3		55	95%	24.5	27.5
10A	60		22	38		60	37%	No Change	30
11A	75		62	13		75	83%	24.5	37.5
13A	60		29	31		60	48%	No Change	30
Totals	1195	65	700	495	65	1260	59%	172.5	
								30% increase to public draw	
						50-70% of tags			
						71-90% of tags			
						over 91% of tags			

2023									
Unit	Any license	doe fawn	Gratis	public	public doe fawn	total tags	gratis percentage of total buck	50/50 split additive to public	SB 2155 - 50/50 split
1A						0		0	0
1D						0		0	0
2A	50		39	11		50	78%	14	25
2B	30		15	15		30	50%	0	15
3A	15					15	0%	7.5	7.5
3B	70		42	28		70	60%	7	35
4A	75		51	24		75	68%	13.5	37.5
4C	50		24	26		50	48%	-1	25
5A	60		43	17		60	72%	13	30
6A						0		0	0
7A	65		57	8		65	88%	24.5	32.5
8A						0		0	0
9A						0		0	0
9C						0		0	0
10A						0		0	0
11A						0		0	0
13A						0		0	0
Totals	415	0	271	129	0	415	65%	78.5	
								60% increase to public draw	
						50-70% of tags			
						71-90% of tags			
						over 91% of tags			



Population change from 2021-2023



I am very strongly in support of SB 2155. Despite what looks like an abundance of licenses on the Game & Fish website, I've only been lucky enough to draw a pronghorn tag once in many years of trying. My wife and I had a wonderful time and were glad to spend money in Bowman as part of that hunt weekend. While we spent much time hunting, we also greatly enjoyed exploring a part of the state that we otherwise probably would not have visited. Now we now make a point to hike and hunt birds in that corner of the state most years. I very much hope that I would have better odds to be able to experience this state's hunting opportunities in the future. North Dakota has a proud outdoors tradition and allowing as many of its citizens access to our wonderful resources in a sustainable manner honors the spirit of Theodore Roosevelt. Thank you for your time.

Mike Bush

House Energy and Natural Resources Committee,

I am writing today to express my support for SB2155 and encourage you to give this bill a *“Do Pass”* recommendation.

Hunting pronghorn in North Dakota is a highly sought after experience with demand (unfortunately) outweighing supply. Many non-landowners will wait 10 years or more to draw a license allowing them to hunt a buck antelope while some landowners are able to draw one annually. With pronghorn populations low and license demand high, the current gratis system needs to be amended. SB2155 is a good start to that process.

The current system allows the first 50 buck licenses to be allocated to landowners owning land in the hunting unit. Due to consistently low pronghorn populations, several units see more licenses go to landowners than non-landowning applicants, despite a majority of applications coming from non-landowners. This bill will not eliminate opportunities for landowners to have licenses allocated to them. Rather, it will make the number of landowner tags equal to 50% of the total buck tags allocated in that unit.

Thank you for considering my testimony and please give SB2155 a *“Do Pass”* recommendation.

Joseph Doll
Bismarck, ND

SB 2155

Please support SB 2155 to bring fairness to antelope tag allocations. Residents of ND who do not have the ability to draw gratis tags face long odds to draw tags, especially with diminished pronghorn numbers. In some draw units gratis tags account for most of the given licenses, even when much of the unit is public land.

-Logan Anderson

Testimony in favor and support of SB2155 – Relating to Gratis Antelope Licenses

My Name is Blake Amon, and I am a lifelong resident of North Dakota. I urge you to please support and DO PASS SB2155. The current structure completely favors landowners and leaves very minimal opportunities to the public. North Dakota Antelope are a public resource and the distribution of tags to the residents of this state should be fair to all of us through the lottery. This bill addresses that issue. Please DO PASS.

Sincerely,

Blake Amon

Testimony of Richard Nelson
SB2155

SB2155 will enhance the opportunities for non-landowners to obtain a much coveted license via the Pronghorn lottery. When implemented this legislation will provide value to citizens hoping to be able to hunt pronghorns in the fall.

Therefore, I respectfully request that committee members vote YES on SB2155. Thank you.

Richard Nelson
1327 Pin Oak Loop
Bismarck, ND. 58501

In Support of SB 2155 – Pronghorn Bill

Senate Bill 2155 seeks to amend North Dakota's pronghorn hunting license distribution by establishing a more equitable 50/50 split between landowner (gratis) and non-landowner hunters. Currently, the first 50 pronghorn tags in each unit are exclusively reserved for gratis hunters, with the remaining licenses divided equally. This system can lead to scenarios where non-landowner hunters have a significantly lower chance of obtaining a license, sometimes facing decade-long waits.

[North Dakota Legislative Branch](#)

By implementing a consistent 50/50 allocation, SB 2155 aims to balance hunting opportunities, ensuring that both landowners and non-landowners have equitable access to pronghorn licenses. This change is expected to reduce the waiting period for non-landowner hunters while maintaining favorable odds for landowners. The North Dakota Wildlife Federation supports this bill, highlighting its potential to create a more equitable distribution of hunting licenses.

[North Dakota Legislative Branch](#)

Supporting SB 2155 is essential for promoting fairness in North Dakota's hunting community and ensuring sustainable wildlife management practices.

SB 2155

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 2155. As an avid hunter and conservationist, I believe this bill is a fair balance between landowner privileges and public hunting opportunities. While I respect the rights of landowners to receive tags, it is essential to ensure that public hunters have equitable access to pronghorn hunting opportunities. Senate Bill 2155 helps maintain fairness in tag allocation, ensuring that the broader hunting community—many of whom contribute to conservation efforts through license fees and excise taxes—has a fair chance to participate in pronghorn hunts. I urge you to vote yes on SB 2155

Dirk McWhorter

Sb2155

Members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resource Committee,

I am asking for a "Do pass" recommendation.

This bill would ensure a more balanced distribution of pronghorn hunting licenses between gratis hunters and the general lottery hunters. We have an opportunity to help tip the scales in potentially decade-long wait for the general public hunter to draw an antelope tag. As a hunter who feeds my wife and children on wild game more opportunity is more chance my children will have the same passion for wildlife and wildlife game as I do.

This bill would establish a consistent allocation of pronghorn licenses between landowner and lottery hunters. This change will result in a more even distribution of licenses and more opportunities for the generations non gratis hunters.

Russell Senske

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.

This bill is not asking for anything dramatic; only to put a few more tags into your average hunters hands.

Landowners will still enjoy their more than fair share considering that THEY DO NOT OWN THE ANIMALS IN QUESTION.

Some are making this bill out to be infringing on landowners rights. I ask, which rights are those?

The animals subject to this bill ARE OWNED BY EVERYONE.

Landowners will still have first dibs on tags. I understand that landowners often have to “deal” with the wildlife on their property. They will still enjoy a great benefit.

Lastly, the attention seems to be on angering landowners; what about North Dakota hunters? Do no legislators here care about them or are willing to fight their rights? They have just as much of a right to harvest these animals as landowners do.

There’s a reason we use the North American Model of Wildlife Management; because it works for EVERYONE. Striking out the relevant language in this bill is a step closer to that model, and AWAY from the European Model, where landowners own the wildlife, and access to these animals requires a fat stack of cash. We’re better than that.

Support your average Joe North Dakota hunter by putting a few more pronghorn tags in their pockets.

SB 2155 Information

Casey Anderson - Wildlife Division Chief, North Dakota Game and Fish Department

TABLE 1. Lottery information and license distribution summarized by hunting unit, application type, and pronghorn type for the 2024 pronghorn hunting season.

HUNTING UNIT	APPL. TYPE	LIC. TYPE	LIC. AVAILABLE	NO. APPLICANTS	LIC. ISSUED
01A	Gratis	Any	0	62	62
01A	Lottery	Any	120	2,428	58
01A	Lottery	Doe/Fawn	25	84	25
01D	Gratis	Any	0	38	38
01D	Lottery	Any	150	2,173	111
01D	Lottery	Doe/Fawn	25	60	25
02A	Gratis	Any	0	33	33
02A	Lottery	Any	60	721	27
02B	Gratis	Any	0	19	19
02B	Lottery	Any	50	951	31
03A	Gratis	Any	0	4	4
03A	Lottery	Any	25	302	21
03B	Gratis	Any	0	42	42
03B	Lottery	Any	70	1,007	27
03B	Lottery	Doe/Fawn	15	27	15
04A	Gratis	Any	0	54	54
04A	Lottery	Any	75	1,626	22
04C	Gratis	Any	0	18	18
04C	Lottery	Any	55	348	37
05A	Gratis	Any	0	48	48
05A	Lottery	Any	60	483	12
06A	Gratis	Any	0	105	75
06A	Lottery	Any	100	707	25
07A	Gratis	Any	0	72	67
07A	Lottery	Any	85	567	18
08A	Gratis	Any	0	56	52
08A	Lottery	Any	55	259	3
09A	Gratis	Any	0	24	24
09A	Lottery	Any	40	180	16
09C	Gratis	Any	0	76	52
09C	Lottery	Any	55	446	3
10A	Gratis	Any	0	22	22
10A	Lottery	Any	60	259	38
11A	Gratis	Any	0	113	62
11A	Lottery	Any	75	616	13
13A	Gratis	Any	0	29	29
13A	Lottery	Any	60	843	31
Statewide	Gratis	Any	0	815	701
Statewide	Lottery	Any	1,195	13,916	493
Statewide	Lottery	Doe/Fawn	65	171	65
TOTAL			1,260	14,902	1,259

SB 2155 Information

Casey Anderson - Wildlife Division Chief, North Dakota Game and Fish Department

TABLE 2. Estimates of pronghorn hunting activity summarized by hunting unit, application type, and pronghorn type for the 2024 season.

HUNTING UNIT	APPL. TYPE	LIC. TYPE	LIC. ISSUED	NO. HUNTERS	DID NOT HUNT	TOT. HUNT DAYS	AVG. HUNT DAYS	TOT. HARVEST	95% CI	HUNTER SUCCESS (%)
01A	Gratis	Any	62	39	23	117	3.00	24	18-30	61.5
01A	Lottery	Any	58	56	2	162	2.90	52	50-54	92.9
01A	Lottery	Doe/Fawn	25	25	0	47	1.90	22	20-24	88.0
01D	Gratis	Any	38	24	14	80	3.30	11	5-17	45.8
01D	Lottery	Any	111	105	6	285	2.70	95	92-98	90.5
01D	Lottery	Doe/Fawn	25	23	2	51	2.20	18	15-21	78.3
02A	Gratis	Any	33	20	13	58	2.90	12	5-19	60.0
02A	Lottery	Any	27	25	2	61	2.40	21	19-23	84.0
02B	Gratis	Any	19	16	3	71	4.40	7	2-12	43.8
02B	Lottery	Any	31	31	0	63	2.00	28	26-30	90.3
03A	Gratis	Any	4	1	3	3	3.00	0	0-0	0.0
03A	Lottery	Any	21	19	2	69	3.60	13	11-15	68.4
03B	Gratis	Any	42	25	17	86	3.40	7	1-13	28.0
03B	Lottery	Any	27	24	3	50	2.10	20	18-22	83.3
03B	Lottery	Doe/Fawn	15	13	2	31	2.40	11	10-12	84.6
04A	Gratis	Any	54	31	23	100	3.20	14	6-22	45.2
04A	Lottery	Any	22	22	0	38	1.70	16	13-19	72.7
04C	Gratis	Any	18	9	9	34	3.80	4	1-7	44.4
04C	Lottery	Any	37	32	5	98	3.10	27	24-30	84.4
05A	Gratis	Any	48	38	10	117	3.10	18	13-23	47.4
05A	Lottery	Any	12	12	0	25	2.10	10	8-12	83.3
06A	Gratis	Any	75	60	15	228	3.80	32	24-40	53.3
06A	Lottery	Any	25	23	2	48	2.10	20	17-23	87.0
07A	Gratis	Any	67	45	22	121	2.70	23	16-30	51.1
07A	Lottery	Any	18	18	0	38	2.10	16	15-17	88.9
08A	Gratis	Any	52	36	16	150	4.20	15	10-20	41.7
08A	Lottery	Any	3	3	0	4	1.30	3	3-3	100.0
09A	Gratis	Any	24	14	10	84	6.00	4	1-7	28.6

SB 2155 Information

Casey Anderson - Wildlife Division Chief, North Dakota Game and Fish Department

TABLE 2. Estimates of pronghorn hunting activity summarized by hunting unit, application type, and pronghorn type for the 2024 season.

HUNTING UNIT	APPL. TYPE	LIC. TYPE	LIC. ISSUED	NO. HUNTERS	DID NOT HUNT	TOT. HUNT DAYS	AVG. HUNT DAYS	TOT. HARVEST	95% CI	HUNTER SUCCESS (%)
09A	Lottery	Any	16	12	4	24	2.00	12	9-15	100.0
09C	Gratis	Any	52	44	8	134	3.00	30	24-36	68.2
09C	Lottery	Any	3	3	0	20	6.70	3	3-3	100.0
10A	Gratis	Any	22	13	9	61	4.70	5	2-8	38.5
10A	Lottery	Any	38	36	2	95	2.60	33	30-36	91.7
11A	Gratis	Any	62	55	7	314	5.70	24	16-32	43.6
11A	Lottery	Any	13	13	0	21	1.60	11	10-12	84.6
13A	Gratis	Any	29	25	4	87	3.50	13	8-18	52.0
13A	Lottery	Any	31	29	2	94	3.20	26	23-29	89.7
Statewide	Gratis	Any	701	495	206	1,845	3.70	243	220-266	49.1
Statewide	Lottery	Any	493	463	30	1,195	2.60	406	397-415	87.7
Statewide	Lottery	Doe/Fawn	65	61	4	129	2.10	51	47-55	83.6
TOTAL			1,259	1,019	240	3,169	3.10	700	674-726	68.7

2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Energy and Natural Resources Committee

Coteau AB Room, State Capitol

SB 2155

3/27/2025

Relating to gratis antelope licenses.

9:25 a.m. Chairman Porter called the hearing to order.

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

Members absent: Representative Headland, Representative M. Ruby

Discussion Topics:

- Committee action

9:27 a.m. Representative Dockter proposed on page 2, line 27 changing 'may' to 'must'.

9:27 a.m. Vice Chairman D. Anderson seconded the motion.

Voice Vote: Motion carried

9:28 a.m. Representative Dockter moved a Do Pass as Amended.

9:28 a.m. Vice Chairman D. Anderson 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	AB
Representative Pat D. Heinert	Y
Representative Jorin Johnson	Y
Representative Andrew Marschall	Y
Representative Jeremy L. Olson	Y
Representative Matthew Ruby	AB

Motion carried: 11-0-2

Bill carrier: Representative Conmy

9:29 a.m. Chairman Porter closed the hearing.

House Energy and Natural Resources Committee

SB 2155

03-27-25

Page 2

Leah Kuball, Committee Clerk

CO
3/27/25
10fz

Sixty-ninth
Legislative Assembly
of North Dakota

**PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO
FIRST ENGROSSMENT**

ENGROSSED SENATE BILL NO. 2155

Introduced by

Senators Cleary, Bekkedahl

Representatives Bosch, Steiner

- 1 A BILL for an Act to amend and reenact subsection 5 of section 20.1-03-11 of the North Dakota
2 Century Code, relating to gratis antelope licenses.

3 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:**

4 **SECTION 1. AMENDMENT.** Subsection 5 of section 20.1-03-11 of the North Dakota
5 Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

- 6 5. a. A resident that is an individual, corporation, limited liability company, limited
7 liability partnership, limited partnership, partnership, trust, or life estate, and has
8 executed a lease for at least one hundred fifty acres [60.70 hectares] of land that
9 the resident actively farms or ranches; or a resident that is an individual,
10 corporation, limited liability company, limited liability partnership, limited
11 partnership, partnership, trust, or life estate, and holds title to at least one
12 hundred fifty acres [60.70 hectares] of land, is eligible to submit one application
13 for a license to hunt antelope without charge upon filing a signed application
14 describing that land. The land must be within a unit open for the hunting of
15 antelope. The license must include a legal description of the eligible land
16 described in the completed application and may be used to hunt antelope only
17 upon that land. Upon request, a lessee shall provide proof that the land described
18 in the completed application is leased for agricultural purposes. If not otherwise
19 specified in an agricultural lease, the landowner is entitled to receive the license.
20 An individual licensed under this subsection must be a resident.

- b. If the eligible applicant is a corporation, limited liability company, limited liability partnership, limited partnership, partnership, trust, or life estate, only one license may be issued, and the license must be issued in the name of an individual shareholder, member, partner, beneficiary, or holder of a life estate.
- c. A resident who is eligible for a license under this subsection may transfer that eligibility for the license to a spouse or legal dependent residing customarily with the resident, but no more than one license may be issued under this subsection for any qualifying land. A resident transferring eligibility under this subsection may not receive a license under this subsection for the season for which eligibility was transferred. If not otherwise specified in an agricultural lease, the landowner is entitled to receive the license.
- d. The~~Except as provided in paragraph 2, the~~ number of licenses issued without charge under this subsection may not exceed ~~the total number~~one-half of the number of licenses of any pronghorn license type prescribed for each district or unit in the governor's proclamation.
- (1) If the number of eligible persons who apply for licenses issued without charge under this subsection exceeds the number of licenses prescribed for the district or unit in the governor's proclamation less any licenses that are otherwise designated to be issued with a charge under this subsection, the licenses to be issued without charge must be issued by lottery as prescribed in the governor's proclamation. ~~If the number of licenses prescribed for the district or unit in the governor's proclamation exceeds fifty and if the number of applications for these licenses exceeds the number of licenses prescribed for the district or unit in the governor's proclamation, then one-half of the licenses exceeding fifty must be issued by lottery as prescribed in the governor's proclamation and may not be issued to landowners without charge.~~
- (2) If an eligible person is unsuccessful in receiving a license without charge under paragraph 1, the application for a license without charge must~~may~~ be included in a lottery for remaining licenses issued for the district or unit as prescribed by the governor's proclamation.

**REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE
ENGROSSED SB 2155**

Energy and Natural Resources Committee (Rep. Porter, Chairman) recommends **AMENDMENTS** ([25.0379.03001](#)) and when so amended, recommends **DO PASS** (11 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 2 ABSENT OR EXCUSED AND NOT VOTING). SB 2155 was placed on the Sixth order on the calendar.