



North Dakota Hunter Educator's Association

PO Box 1612
Jamestown, ND 58402-1612
Website: www.ndhea.org

Issue 4 of 4
Nov. 21, 2007

VISION STATEMENT:

A proactive, informed group of ND volunteers who dedicate themselves to promoting quality education, who are recognized as leaders in enriching our hunting heritage with respect to safety, integrity and conservation.



Photo's above:

On behalf of the NDHEA, Al Klatt of Grand Forks, accepted a grant of \$5,000 from Scott Macintosh of the Qwest Foundation. Klatt, a Qwest employee, was recently honored with one of seventeen Qwest "Community Champion" awards for his years of service as a volunteer Hunter Education/Firearm Safety Instructor for the ND Game & Fish Dept. Klatt says the grant will help the NDHEA get the message of "safety while hunting" out to the public. Accepting the award with Al is the NDHEA Board above left.

Photo top right: NDHEA Raffle drawing at Bismarck Scheels on 11/17/07. Pictured left to right are: Mark Walsh, Scheels employee Trapper Wagner, Jim Carter, Dale Patrick, Don Meyer & Scheels employee Greg Eider. The raffle was a great success. Thanks to all of you who helped sell tickets.

Photo bottom left: Ernie Trudeau, NDHEA treasurer and son, Jeff with their dogs and successful kill of the day in the Jamestown area. Thanks for the photo.



2007 NDHEA Officers & District Directors

Past President

Don Meyer
1112 5th Ave. S #5
Devils Lake, ND 58301
701-351-4409
dmm@lrlec.org

President

Mark Walsh
624 11th St. East
Williston, ND 58801
701-572-4891
markw4785@wil.midco.net

Vice President

Terry Fasteen
18228 Sunshine Dr.
Detroit Lakes, MN 56501
218-847-9274
tfasteen@hotmail.com

Secretary

Dale Patrick
9440 Cedar Lane
Bismarck, ND 58503
701-250-0866
dale_patrick1@hotmail.com

Treasurer

Ernie Trudeau
PO Box 1612
Jamestown, ND 58402-1612
701-252-3749
etrudeaund@hotmail.com

District 1

Ron Swenson
1107 West 15th St.
Williston, ND 58801
701-572-6221
fumla_furtrader@yahoo.com

District 2

Clint Baxter
1520 Burdick Expressway East
Minot, ND 58701
701-852-8325
ndheabaxter@yahoo.com

District 3

Lynn Lawler
PO Box 693
Rolla, ND 58360
701-477-5939
kaberlyn@utma.com

District 4

Leland Bratlie
205 4th St. S.
Drayton, ND 58225
701-454-6493
lbratlie@gft.midco.net

District 5

Lori Schweigert
306 9th St. NW
Beulah, ND 58523
701-873-2234
ljschweigert@hotmail.com

District 6

Scott Fasteen
31 Sturgis Loop
Lincoln, ND 58504
701-221-9679
sfasteen@hotmail.com

District 7

Curt Walen
465 3rd St. S.
Carrington, ND 58421
701-652-3612
coyote@daktel.com

District 8

Al Klatt
3326 Primrose Ct.
Grand Forks, ND 58201
701-772-5096
klatt10@msn.com or
ttalk33@yahoo.com

District 9

Dale Kilwein
212 4th Ave. SE
Dickinson, ND 58601
701-483-1729
pkilwein@hotmail.com

District 10

Lynda Miller
706 4th St. NW
Mandan, ND 58554
701-663-3348/fax # same
denlynn@bis.midco.net

District 11

Larry Kaul
24 6th Ave. NW
LaMoure, ND 58458
701-883-5947
Larry.Kaul@sendit.nodak.edu

District 12

Clayton Thompson
832 7th Ave. East
West Fargo, ND 58078
701-282-2955
bowshack@aol.com

Membership Chairman

Charles Vasicek
1817 N. Griffin St.
Bismarck, ND 58501-1546
701-223-9797
csvasicek@bis.midco.net

Cap Chairman

Rod O'Clair
1613 5-1/2 Ave. NE
Jamestown, ND 58401
701-952-2680
roc1949us@yahoo.com

Newsletter Editor

Neva Walsh
624 11th St. East
Williston, ND 58801
701-572-4891
mnwalsh@wil.midco.net

WEBSITE /

COMMUNICATIONS

Neva Walsh
701-572-4891
mnwalsh@wil.midco.net

LEGISLATIVE CHAIR

Rod O'Clair
Leland Bratlie

GRIEVANCE CHAIR

Mark Walsh
markw4785@wil.midco.net

AUDIT & FINANCE CHAIR

Ernie Trudeau
Lynda Miller
Lori Schweigert

HISTORIAN

Terry Fasteen & all
District Reps for their Dist.

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

Like always lets start it out as usual – MEMBERSHIP- MEMBERSHIP- MEMBERSHIP!!!! How do we, as an association get our fellow ND Hunter Education Instructors involved in the NDHEA? I guess we have to contact them in person or by mail. All NDHEA members **PLEASE** reach out and contact fellow instructors. The fun is just about to start for the NDHEA. We as an organization are only as strong as our membership numbers.

Congratulations to Al Klatt from Grand Forks District # 8, for receiving a \$5000.00 grant from QWEST on behalf of the NDHEA. Excellent job Al.

I would like to thank Charles Vasicek for volunteering and being appointed by myself as President of the NDHEA to become the new membership committee chairperson. Chuck's address and e-mail will be posted in the newsletter and on the website. Thank you Chuck.

I feel the NDHEA 2007 raffle was very successful. I thank all the members that sold tickets and showed their support. Many of our members stepped up big time and sold numerous numbers of tickets and I thank them again. The top raffle sales person this year was Dale Patrick with over 500 tickets sold. Great job Dale!! Just remember that the funds raised in the 2007 raffle will support the beginning of the 2008 raffle. The funds raised in the 2008 raffle will be spent on our YOUTH for camps, mentor hunts/ shoots and publication of hunter safety campaigns.

Here is a letter that I sent out to businesses for their support on orange responsible hunter caps. I hope this letter can help you in your area. Just remember to arrange the letter to fit your needs.

I would like to introduce myself. I'm a volunteer North Dakota Hunter Education Instructor and the President of the North Dakota Hunter Educators Association.

I am requesting your assistance in our 7th annual fund drive for the hunter education students that attend the course. For each student that passes the course, we would like to present them with an orange responsible hunter cap. This has worked well in other communities that I have worked with and the students appreciate the recognition they receive. Each cap costs \$5.00 and is furnished through the North Dakota Hunter Educators Association. The average student attendance in the Williston and Trenton area is 200 students per year. Any monetary donation would be appreciated.

The following is a list of Williston and Trenton instructors:

Curtis Horsley Ronald Swenson Doug Crosby

(we have others-just an example for you-put in all instructors names)

If you feel your organization can make a donation, please make your check payable to the NDHEA-District #1, memo caps, and mail to me at the above address. Thank you in advance for your support.

I then signed, dated and mailed or hand delivered to various banks and organizations and had great success with money to buy hunter orange caps which also supported our organization with cap sales. Try it and if you have any questions, give me a call at 701-572-4891 or e-mail me at markw4785@wil.midco.net.

Happy Hunting-Mark

* * * *

2007 NDHEA RAFFLE WINNERS ARE:

1st Place: Ruger M-77 .243 Dave Bachmeier of Bainville, MT ticket sold by Ron Swenson-great job!!

2nd Place: Tikka T-3 .25/06 Carl Lizakowski of Grand Forks, ND ticket sold by Lee Bratlie-great job!!

3rd Place: Ruger 10/22 .22 David Ladouceur of Drayton, ND ticket sold by Lee Bratlie-great job!!

4, 5 & 6th Places-\$50 gift cards to Scheels went to the following people:

Tim Keidel, Mandan, ND-ticket sold by Dale Patrick-great job!!

Dennis Berg, Rolla, ND-ticket sold by Lynn Lawler-great job!!

Sarah Anderson, Devils Lake, ND-ticket sold by Don Meyer-great job!!

Thanks to all of you for your support by selling and buying the raffle tickets :)

November Message from: Terry Fasteen-Vice President

The deer rifle season is finally in action, or perhaps over by the time this gets out. I still wait in anticipation of opening day with hopes of getting the biggest buck of my life. But usually reality sets in as the first decent buck shows his rack, and I take him home.

Like most of you the anticipation and the opening weekend is something more than just the shooting of a deer. But it is something that so many non-hunters will never understand. That is why we are pushing so hard to get the mentorship program in action. The raffle has been a tremendous success and will put us well on the way to being able to fund several hunts and at least one family shooting day.

We desperately need several of our Association members to step forward with assistance in finding locations to hold a hunting event for one day during the coming season. We all realize hunting spots are a golden treasure, but can't we share one day with a small group of first time hunters?

Please consider this request, and contact me by email or telephone. If you want to call me during the work day please use my toll free number @ 218-846-0300. Thanks and hope you had a good hunting season.

* * * * *

PAST PRESIDENT NOTES

To all the Hunter Education Instructors: The question has been raised, are you a member of the NDHEA? Many of you think you are members because you have attended workshops, and/or mini conferences. To be a member of the NDHEA, you have to pay for a yearly membership, usually at the Conference in Bismarck. I sincerely hope all of you that are not members of the NDHEA join our organization. I have personally observed growth of our organization from it's start, and now we are involved in a raffle program to raffle off an antelope hunt, various firearms, and a fishing package on Devils Lake next year during the open water fishing season. I find this endeavor a challenge, and the proceeds will go towards mentored first time hunting experiences, education through advertising, and putting on or assisting with shooting programs throughout the State of North Dakota. I encourage everyone who is an instructor to become a member and get involved with this project. I find this is one way to give back to the sport that has enriched our lives, and is a great part of our Hunting Heritage here in North Dakota. What better way to give back to a sport that means so much to us, by recruiting and retaining youth and first time hunters. Please join our association, and if you have any questions, feel free to call ANY Board member. The names are posted on our web page or in this newsletter. With your membership you will get the newsletter 4 times a year. The cost is only \$10 and could be the best \$10 you have ever spent. This is one association that is going somewhere, so come and be a part of this great association!!

Sincerely
Don Meyer, Past President NDHEA

The cap sales have been slow this fall as I know there are few classes actually taught this time of year. Classes will be picking up in December so remember to try to sell caps and donation opportunities along with your safety training. Please try to drum up some donations from sportsmen's clubs or service organizations so you can give orange caps to your students. As I was out this fall, I noticed most out of state hunters are pretty diligent in wearing hunter orange. We residents need to be just as responsible and can help support the NDHEA at the same time.

It is time to think about nominations for Association awards and office holders. As I pondered whom to nominate for board award or suggest for presidents award, a real problem presented itself. There were too many people deserving of the honors! Let me review a few of them for you.

- Mark Walsh has done an outstanding job as president. He arranged the extra time to manage the Association and the first big fund raising raffle I can recall. He (and I suspect a pretty important person behind the scenes) tracked sales of tickets, organized the details and did a smooth seamless job that the NDHEA can be very proud of. Even after the death of his father, Mark was at the State Fair, promoting the NDHEA.
- Neva Walsh, besides preparing one of the most outstanding newsletters, has been very good about helping the NDHEA with every facet of the organization. She does far more than most of the general membership will ever realize to keep us organized and moving forward.
- Don Meyer has been promoting NDHEA in Devils Lake and supporting the current leadership with his talents and history. It is very nice when the past president stays involved and keeps good programs moving.
- Lee Bratlie's talents as a pusher and go-getter surfaced like you cannot believe. He worked long and hard on the passage of the NDHEA antelope tag legislative bill, made the right contacts, made the right suggestions to the board, and never dropped the ball when playing got a little slow. He was not only a star player this past year but also a very good coach and trainer.
- Terry Fasteen has promoted NDHEA to the point that it is now in the big leagues. He has made sure the big sports stores know about NDHEA and what they do. He took care of so many details for the raffle and future raffles, saved the NDHEA some dollars on awards costs, and spent countless hours investigating opportunities to put NDHEA in the spotlight as he did with arrangements at Scheels sports in Fargo last August.
- Dale Patrick, a charter member of NDHEA, re-entered the scenes like Zorro out of the darkness. He has taken care of the legalities for the antelope tag raffle, researched the gaming laws for the NDHEA, added history, experience and energy to the board and has assured all the membership that all gaming rules are known and adhered to so as to protect our tax exempt and charitable foundation status.
- Lynda Miller has been promoting youth pheasant hunts and family introduction to guns and shooting through her association with the NDHEA and Missouri Valley Shooting Sports organization. She has also been diligent in guarding the charitable foundation status by tracking tax filings and reports. What a go-getter, and all this while baby-sitting that no-good husband!!!!
- Lori Schweigert is always good for constructive discussion at board meetings, looking for new opportunities for the NDHEA to expand and organizes a great, no, fantastic NDHEA membership trap shoot. I credit Lori with the NDHEA mission statement: INSTRUCTORS TEACHING TOMORROWS' HUNTERS.
- Ernie Trudeau has kept good accounting records for the association and assures that all accounts are accurate. It takes some time to do a good job as long time past treasurer, Dave Cox I, could surely attest. To let things slide would bring disaster and surely set the board on its' ear with out good accounting and following good accounting procedures.
- Jim Carter is the ever-present mentor to the NDHEA and also an active member. His knowledge and corporate experience is a great asset which gets used often by the board. There would be some real hurt with out him in the coordinators position.
- Al Klatt for his \$5,000 Qwest grant reward given to the NDHEA. What a wonderful gift to the hunters education program.

Which one would be your choice for these awards? And if you were not aware of how hard your district representatives and state officers work for you, I wanted you to know that too.

Rodney O'Clair
Cap Chairperson

NDHEA
3rd Quarter Board Meeting
October 27th, 2007

President Walsh called the 3rd quarter meeting of the NDHEA Board to order at 1:15 PM. in the auditorium of the ND Game and Fish building.

President Walsh reviewed the agenda and asked if there were any items to add to the agenda.

Vice President Terry Fasteen asked that the topic of Dual Membership with the North Dakota Wildlife Federation (NDWF) be added to the agenda under new business.

Moved by Terry Fasteen to approve the agenda with the addition of Dual Membership with NDWF.

2nd – Lori Schweigert.

Motion passed

Roll call of membership was conducted by Secretary Patrick.

President Walsh called for the Secretary's report.

Secretary's report was presented by Secretary Patrick as printed in the newsletter.

Moved by Don Meyer to approve the Secretary's report as printed in the newsletter.

2nd – Al Klatt

Motion passed

President called for the Treasurer's report.

Ernie Trudeau recommended investing some of the funds to increase income instead of just leaving those funds in checking.

The second page of the treasurer's report is a listing of the district accounts.

The last page of the raffle report is a report of income and expenses related to the raffle that is currently ongoing.

Dale Patrick presented a statement for reimbursement of \$25.00 for the Solicitation Permit from the Secretary of State for which he paid.

Moved by Lynda Miller to approve the Treasures report.

2nd - Don Meyer

Motion passed

Dale Patrick moved that motel expenses for travel to this mornings meeting for Leland Bratlie and Mark Walsh be reimbursed.

2nd - Al Klatt

Motion passed

Old Business

President Walsh asked for an update on the two items that were tabled at the last meeting from Lori Schweigert.

Hunt of a Lifetime – Lori asked that this item be dropped because of the licensing requirements to meet the regulations as set out by the North Dakota legislature and the North Dakota Game and Fish Department.

This item remains on the table and was not taken from the table.

Lori Schweigert also reported on the Disabled Veterans goose hunt. The hunt is going on as we meet and Lori would still like to see support from NDHEA.

Al Klatt voiced his support of the Disabled Veterans Goose Hunt and stated that he would not mind at all if some of the Quest Grant funds were used for this event. During further discussion it was found that this organization is a loosely knit group of persons doing a good deed, but there currently is no accounting of the funds needed or how funds are used for this event.

Terry F. indicated that NDHEA would need some accounting of expenses before any funds were spent on this event.

Clayton Thompson suggested that maybe Boy Scouts or other groups could be used to help with this event.

Don Meyer indicated there might be insurance concerns related to liability.

This item remains on the table and was not taken from the table for discussion or vote.

President Walsh requested a report from Terry Fasteen on the Waterfowl Fest that was held in Fargo at the Scheels Store.

Terry Fasteen reported that a tent was set up at Scheels in Fargo in August to promote NDHEA. There was a good attendance at this event on both Friday and Saturday and Scheels has arranged for radio coverage of this event. Some raffle tickets were sold and there was a chance to meet with some of the vendors. Terry recommends that this event be on our schedule again next year but that they could use more help with the booth.

President Walsh requested a report on progress acquiring the history and historical documents for NDHEA and progress on their storage.

Terry Fasteen reports that Action Moving in Bismarck has secure inside storage for storage in banker's boxes (\$2.25 per box) plus a monthly fee for storage of each box. They can help with scanning files and put those files up electronically so they might be accessed remotely via computer.

Moved by Clayton Thompson to go with the interior storage at Action Movers and scanning with a disk back up in the safe that is maintained by the Treasurer.

2nd – Dale Patrick

Motion Passed

Membership Committee report:

President Walsh shared with the board the resignation of Bill and Sharon Titus from this committee and indicated that he had requested recommendations of individuals who would be willing to take on this committee task. President Walsh also asked if there were any volunteers and hearing of none President Walsh appointed Chuck Vasicek as the Membership Chairperson. Chuck Vasicek was recommended to serve on this committee and agreed to take on the task.

President Walsh requested a report from Neva Walsh on raffle ticket sales for the 2007 raffle.

Neva Walsh reported raffle sales to date of \$8,565.00.

President Walsh is requesting that each district representative follow up with persons in their district, who have tickets, to get those tickets sold and sent back as soon as they could. Tickets, stubs, and money must be in by November 5th. President Walsh presented each District Representative with a list of individuals that had tickets in their possession so they could be contacted.

During the discussion of the 2007 raffle, President Walsh indicated that some suppliers had responded with donations as a result of the letter requesting their support for the 2008 raffle which will be coming up. It was suggested that letters of thanks should be sent out soon. There was discussion about printing up some "Thank You" cards that could be used for these donations as well as being used by NDHEA members as a thank you for land access while hunting to create good will with landowners. It was decided that Dale Patrick would work on a design of such a "Thank You" with Jim Carter.

Don Meyer described what the ½ day fishing trip on Devils Lake would include which was one of the gifts for the 2008 raffle. President Mark Walsh described a number of the other prizes that have been received.

New Business:

President Walsh began a discussion regarding the 2008 Raffle. Lynda Miller suggested that Stout Ford in Jamestown might be willing to work with NDHEA around the idea of including a truck in the raffle.

Terry Fasteen briefed the board regarding Sportsman's Warehouse in Fargo suggesting that they would be very willing to help sponsor the raffle that NDHEA would sponsor during the next year. They would make it a media day with radio and newspaper advertising and a discount in the store for those customers who have bought a raffle ticket. In addition, they would be generous with items for prizes that could be included in the raffle.

There was a discussion around what the price of the raffle tickets should be priced at. It was pointed out that many people look at odds of winning before buying a ticket thereby asking how many tickets will be sold. There was discussion that NDHEA would need to consider how much net income was needed to fund the mentored hunts and youth activities that were to be planned and that this might have an impact on what the price of the ticket should be and how many tickets were to be sold.

There was no consensus as to what the price of the tickets should be.

President Walsh opened discussion on the Board Award which needs to be decided upon at this meeting.

Board Award Suggestions from Don Meyer included Joel Heitkamp, Mr. Steve Scheels, Rod O'Clair, Ernie Trudeau.

President Walsh asked if there were any other recommendations for the Board Award. Leland Bratlie indicated that Senator Joel Heitkamp and Rep. Damschen were instrumental in getting the Antelope Tag bill passed through the 2007 Legislature, and they should be the ones sharing this award. There were no other suggestions.

Moved by Leland Bratlie that Joel Heitkamp and Rep. Damschen be awarded the Board Award.

2nd – Al Klatt

Motion passed

There was discussion about the annual meeting regarding the Hospitality Room (\$150.00 - \$200.00 to stock) for the annual meeting. Lori Schweigert will work on the arrangements with anyone who will help. Friday Night, Board members can stop by starting at 8:00 pm and Saturday night after the Banquet and the awards.

District Reps. should bring door prizes to the meeting and the Silent Auction will continue as in the past.

President Walsh brought up the topic of Insurance that would be needed to compete for the Game and Fish Grant program. Rod O'Clair, Dale Patrick, and Lynda Miller have been checking into the sources for insurance and getting cost quotes. Lynda Miller contacted the NRA and found that insurance would be available for approximately \$600.00 with \$35.00 of that going towards Associate NRA membership for NDHEA. During the morning meeting with NDWF, those present at the meeting became aware that affiliation with NDWF would also allow for possible insurance coverage for our events. Dale Patrick will be checking with NDWF and NRA regarding insurance for events.

NDWF and NDHEA morning meeting went well and efforts are underway to partner with each other on common goals and interests. There was a discussion with Jim Carter regarding communication between the two organizations. During the meeting this morning a number of areas of common interest were discussed as well as dual membership in the two organizations. (please see excerpt from Shawn McKenna e-mail below)

There was a discussion regarding the storage of the NDHEA banner and the purchase of additional banners to be used by each district. Ernie Trudeau will explore the concern regarding banners/displays and report back at the next meeting.

Secretary Patrick suggested there was a need to purchase a new recorder for meetings, as the current recorder was not in very good condition. Secretary Patrick was directed by President Walsh with concurrence from the board to purchase new recording equipment for meetings.

There was a discussion regarding enhancing NDHEA membership. It was suggested by Ernie Trudeau that name tags show who are members. Then members could easily identify those that were not members and then be able to encourage them to join. Continuing discussion revolved around a number of ways to increase membership. It was suggested that a letter should be sent to all Instructors to encourage them to join NDHEA.

Committee Reports:

Finance – no additional report

Caps – 371 caps on hand

Approx. 300 caps sold

Grievance – none

Historian – Terry is collecting items

Legislative – None

Membership – 150 members. Resignation letter received from Bill and Sharon Titus

Newsletter and Website – Ryan is unable to help with the website. Newsletter will be done by Neva only one more year.

Report from Jim Carter, Education Director of ND Game and Fish:

Mr. Carter suggested that the annual conference could be presented by members of NDHEA and that there would be two separate sessions for the conference.

1) One would involve the use of the DVD and working with a power point.

2) The second would involve the on line registration and how to use the registration page and the reason it is necessary to have the on line registration.

Mr. Carter indicated that there would be a \$700.00 honorarium given to NDHEA for the presentations done by the members of the Board.

Moved by Dale Patrick to accept Jim Carters offer to have NDHEA instructors present at the annual workshop.

NDHEA will conduct the presentations at the January Conference in two separate sessions as suggested by Jim Carter.

2nd – Leland Bratlie

Motion passed

Moved by L. Bratlie to adjourn at 4:20 PM

Meeting adjourned

/s Dale Patrick, Secretary

Excerpt from e-mail from Shawn McKenna received 10-30-07: *“This past weekend President Don Baasch and I met with the executive board of the ND Hunter Educator Association (NDHEA) here in Bismarck. They invited us to their meeting to see if we couldn’t find some common ground between our two organizations and look for way where we might be able to work together in the future. Our mission statements are very similar, and we have many of the same goals for the future. Both Donnie and I felt it was a very productive meeting and there are definitely places where we can work together.*

Some of those areas are:

Youth Camp Shoot day...a couple of their members expressed interest in helping with this event.

Possible Hunter’s Ed certification during camp

Legislative Coalition

Linking websites

Exchanging newsletters

Becoming affiliates of each other’s organization

They could provide an Instructor for the NDWF’s Instructor of the year award.

Event scheduling...finding dates that don’t overlap

I’m sure I missed some of the things we talked about, but at the end of the meeting we decided we’d explore this further so I’ll keep you posted of any developments.

This was only a 2 hour meeting and we came up with many great ideas for where we can work together. If any of you can think of additional ways we can come together please let me know.”

**“THE NORTH AMERICAN FISH & WILDLIFE MODEL-
A HERITAGE IN PERIL”**

**Prepared by Jim Posewitz
Orion The Hunters’ Institute**

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Two hundred years ago Lewis and Clark marveled at the wildlife abundance of Montana. Thomas Jefferson was our president.

One hundred years ago our continent was stripped of its big game and other wild animals were under duress. Theodore Roosevelt was president and he and associates introduced a nation to conservation and began the process of wildlife restoration. They began by shutting down the commerce in wildlife, setting aside conservation lands, committing to public education, and protecting the democracy of hunting.

Today our wildlife abundance exceeds anything that any other human culture has been able to achieve. Our effort was unique in that wildlife attached, not to property but to people. Each state has a conservation record consistent with the national achievement and rich with its own stories of a conservation ethic embedded in its people.

The Current Problem

When fish and wildlife conservation was born late in the 19th Century the first requirement was to end the commerce in those resources. As the 21st Century begins, a new version of the buffalo hunters are back with a new business model and it features privatizing public resources. We are once again at a critical crossroads in fish and wildlife conservation. For more than 150 years, fish and wildlife in America have been a resource belonging to all the people, judicially designated a public trust. This management system, the most successful fish and wildlife conservation model on earth, has been eroding for the last 30 years. Today’s abundance of fish and wildlife has again caught the attention of commercial interests. As those interests secure privileged access to these public resources, the public faces growing limitations.

The Consequences

The North American Model of Fish and Wildlife Conservation is unique in that fish and wildlife attach to the people rather than to property. This democratic feature requires that for all Americans to share these resources, a conservation ethic had to be embedded in our culture. That was accomplished a century ago during the presidential tenure of Theodore Roosevelt. For over a century, a conservation ethic permeated the development of our nation. While this ethic spread broadly through our culture, its birth can be traced to sport hunters and anglers of the late 19th Century.

As we diminish the people’s opportunity to relate to conservation through hunting and fishing we risk diminishing the conservation ethic of the people. This has occurred in other cultures where fish and wildlife attached, not to the people, but to property. England is a good example where six major mammals that would qualify as game animals are now extinct, poaching was often identified as the number one rural crime, and Parliament recently voted to ban the traditional fox hunt. Some observers describe that act as a continuation of a class struggle. The losers are the people and the wildlife.

The Neglect

Those seeking to commercialize fish and wildlife in America have been able to compromise the traditional democratic allocation of these resources. They did this because the trustee of these resources (the state) was generally unaware of responsibilities associated with a public trust. Although present in fish and wildlife litigation since 1842, the International Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies only formally recognized the public trust principle as part of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation in 2002. There is little evidence that the concept is embraced by fish and wildlife agencies and less evidence that state political leaders are aware of its significance. Thus, through the concentrated influence of active commercial minorities, the broad interest of hunters and anglers continues to be compromised.

The Symptoms of Neglect

Symptoms of favoring interest groups who would privatize fish and wildlife resources are many. A few symptoms are: hunters complaining of loss of access; diminishing participation; commercial interests clogging prime fishing streams; stream and public land access issues intensifying; privileged access to hunting licenses are sought; traditional wildlife management strategies become dysfunctional; and a new class-system emerges within our traditionally democratic outdoor heritage.

In Arizona, recent litigation over access to wildlife resulted in federal courts ruling that wildlife management now had to conform to the commerce clause of the U.S. Constitution and could not discriminate against non-residents. The same issue went before the U. S. Supreme Court in 1978. They ruled that Montana could discriminate because conservation required it. That case was brought under the privileges and immunities clause of the U.S. Constitution. The difference may well be the negligence of the states to separate the conservation of fish and wildlife from the commerce in those same resources. New challenges to state licensing systems that favor resident hunters and anglers can be expected. This time they will be brought under the commerce clause of the U.S. Constitution. Its impact could be enormous. Arizona never made a public trust argument in their defense – possibly because they couldn't.

The Solution

What the North American fish and wildlife conservation ethic needs at this point in history is public interest leadership. Since these resources are still a public trust held by the states, leaders at the state level could be effective. An example from history was the model fish and game commission system that emerged in Iowa in 1931. It was widely copied and successfully followed throughout the nation. Today, states are in a position to assert a similar leadership while protecting themselves from litigation spinning out of the commerce clause of the U.S. Constitution. The steps necessary would include:

- 1) a political commitment to resident hunters and anglers;
- 2) selection of natural resource commissioners consistent with that commitment;
- 3) accepting the state's public trust responsibility by including language to that effect in legislation affecting those resources;
- 4) sponsor legislation declaring fish and wildlife a cultural amenity; and, specifically not a commercial commodity;
- 5) direction to state fish and wildlife agencies to initiate an education program relative to the North American Model of Fish and Wildlife Conservation as adopted by the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies;
- 6) recommend that number 5 above be addressed in university system curriculums in fish and wildlife biology and management;
- 7) formation of a select committees to study means of separating conservation of fish and wildlife from the commerce in those resources; and,
- 8) opposing any legislative efforts giving privileges that contribute to commercializing fish and wildlife.

The Achilles Heel of Reform

Making a commitment to resident hunters and anglers in general and to restoring or protecting their access to fish and wildlife will have detractors. The ammunition of detraction is almost certain to include anecdotal stories of bad hunter behavior. Thus it is essential to also make a commitment to address that issue through hunter education. The current program of entry-level hunter education is already excellent. What is needed is an option for continuing hunter education for adults (as a voluntary program). This was recommended by Hunter Behavior Advisory Group in various states and by the International Hunter Education Association. It would need to be specified that person to person contact (live instructors) be in the design.

The resistance to expanding hunter education is probably based on allocation of financial resources. Entry level of hunter education is currently the country's biggest bargain (virtually all volunteer). Continuing education can follow the same model, but it will mean a reallocation of some resources (\$) within agencies. The goal is to give landowners and others an assurance that while the interests of resident hunters and anglers are being protected, the state's intent includes improving their knowledge, stressing their responsibilities, and strengthening their ethical sensitivities. The program would be voluntary, but it would give landowners a choice should they elect to grant access. Perhaps most important it will reflect a genuine state concern for the behavior issue.