



*The Mission of the Mule Deer Foundation is to ensure the conservation of mule deer, black-tailed deer, and their habitat.*

1785 East 1450 South, Suite 210  
Clearfield, UT 84015

August 19, 2024

Reice Haase, Deputy Executive Director  
North Dakota Industrial Commission  
ATTN: Outdoor Heritage Fund Program  
600 East Boulevard Ave., Dept. 405  
Bismarck, ND 58505

RE: Western Big Game Connectivity and Habitat Fragmentation Proposal

Dear Mr. Haase,

I am pleased to submit this grant proposal titled “Western Big Game Connectivity and Habitat Fragmentation” on behalf of Mule Deer Foundation for consideration under the North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund. Our proposal seeks funding to improve big game connectivity across landscapes and reduce habitat fragmentation through the utilization of wildlife-friendly designed fencing in western North Dakota.

The primary objective of this project is to enhance the movement and safety of big game species, such as deer, elk, pronghorn, moose and bighorn sheep by replacing or modifying existing barriers with fencing that allows for easier passage. This initiative will not only support the health and sustainability of local wildlife populations but also contribute to the broader goals of habitat conservation and ecosystem integrity.

Our proposal aligns with the Outdoor Heritage Fund’s directives to develop, enhance, conserve, and restore wildlife and fish habitat on private and public lands. By implementing wildlife-friendly fencing, we aim to create a more connected and resilient landscape that benefits both wildlife and the agricultural community.

We appreciate the opportunity to apply for this grant and are confident that our project will make a significant positive impact on the environment and wildlife in western North Dakota. Thank you for your consideration and support.

Sincerely,

*Collin W. Smith*

Collin Smith  
Director of Private Land Conservation  
csmith@muledeer.org  
(406) 570-9103

*The Mule Deer Foundation*  
1785 East 1450 West, Suite 210, Clearfield, UT 84015  
801-973-3940 [www.muledeer.org](http://www.muledeer.org)

# Outdoor Heritage Fund Grant Application



## Instructions

After completing the form, applications and supporting documentation may be submitted by e-mail to [ndicgrants@nd.gov](mailto:ndicgrants@nd.gov). It is preferred that only electronic copies are submitted.

You are not limited to the spacing provided, except in those instances where there is a limit on the number of words. If you need additional space, please indicate that on the application form, answer the question on a separate page, and include with your submission.

The application and all attachments must be received by the application deadline. You may submit your application at any time prior to the application deadline. **Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit applications prior to the deadline for staff review in order ensure that proposals will be complete when submitted on deadline date.** Incomplete applications may not be considered for funding.

**Please review the back of this form to determine project eligibility, definitions, budget criteria, and statutory requirements.**

Project Name: Western Big Game Connectivity and Habitat Fragmentation

Name of Organization: Mule Deer Foundation

Federal Tax ID#:

Contact Person/Title: Collin Smith, Director of Private Land Conservation

Address: 1785 East 1450 South, Suite 210

City: Clearfield

State: Utah

Zip Code: 84015

E-mail Address: [csmith@muledeer.org](mailto:csmith@muledeer.org)

Web Site Address (If applicable): [www.muledeer.org](http://www.muledeer.org)

Phone: (406) 570-9103

List names of co-applicants if this is a joint proposal

**MAJOR Directive:**

Choose only one response

**Directive A.** Providing access to private and public lands for sportsmen, including projects that create fish and wildlife habitat and provide access for sportsmen;

**Directive B.** Improving, maintaining and restoring water quality, soil conditions, plant diversity, animal systems and by supporting other practices of stewardship to enhance farming and ranching;

**Directive C.** Developing, enhancing, conserving and restoring wildlife and fish habitat on private and public lands; and

**Directive D.** Conserving natural areas and creating other areas for recreation through the establishment and development of parks and other recreation areas.

**Additional Directive:**

Choose all that apply

**Directive A.**

**Directive B.**

**Directive C.**

**Directive D.**

**Type of organization:**

State Agency

Political Subdivision

Tribal Entity

Tax-exempt, nonprofit corporation.

### **Abstract/Executive Summary.**

Summarize the project, including its objectives, expected results, duration, total project costs and participants. (no more than 500 words)

North Dakota is home to many iconic large mammal populations. Each year, thousands enjoy hunting, watching, or photographing elk, deer, moose, bighorn sheep and pronghorn as they move across the landscapes. An integral part of the region's ecology, economy, and culture, these animals have come to represent the very essence of North Dakota.

Technological advances in research have provided new knowledge of how these animals travel, seeking essential resources required to survive. Awareness of the importance of maintaining landscape connectivity to sustain big game populations has increased, while simultaneously shedding light on factors and features that impair critical movements. Wildlife managers and landowners are working to better avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts caused by one of the most pervasive features that wildlife encounter – fences.

In the working landscapes of the West, fences serve crucial roles in managing livestock, marking property lines, and safeguarding natural resources. However, they also pose significant risks to wildlife, functioning as obstacles to movement and causing distress, injury, and even mortality. As awareness of the importance of connectivity increases, so does the interest in mitigation strategies. The NRCS recently expanded their Migratory Big Game Initiative from a successful pilot program in Wyoming to a broader scope that encompasses Montana and Idaho. Although not every species within North Dakota's big game populations undertakes extensive migrations through defined corridors like those in the Rocky Mountain highlands, significant movements do take place across the state's terrain as these animals seek seasonally available resources. North Dakota's vast expanse of fencing is a testament to the growing widespread concern for the potential disruption of big game travel and habitat connectivity in the Great Plains states.



Photo: MFWP

Hazardous or impassable fencing presents dual concerns: a source of direct injury or death through entanglement, and as obstructions that impede safe and effective passage. Injury and mortality generally result from fences that are too high to jump over, too low to crawl under, have loose wires, have wires that are too close together or are difficult for fast moving animals to see. Most fatalities occur when animals get caught in the top two wires trying to jump the fence. Strand spacing and total fence height are important factors in wildlife friendly designs.

Impenetrable fences, such as woven wire and 6-7 strand, commonly constructed during the sheep ranching era, can result in stress and effectually fragmented habitat. They're also known to result in mortality of deer or pronghorn fawns, and elk or moose calves left behind. Much of this fencing is obsolete for current cattle operations, yet it remains in place aging, but intact.

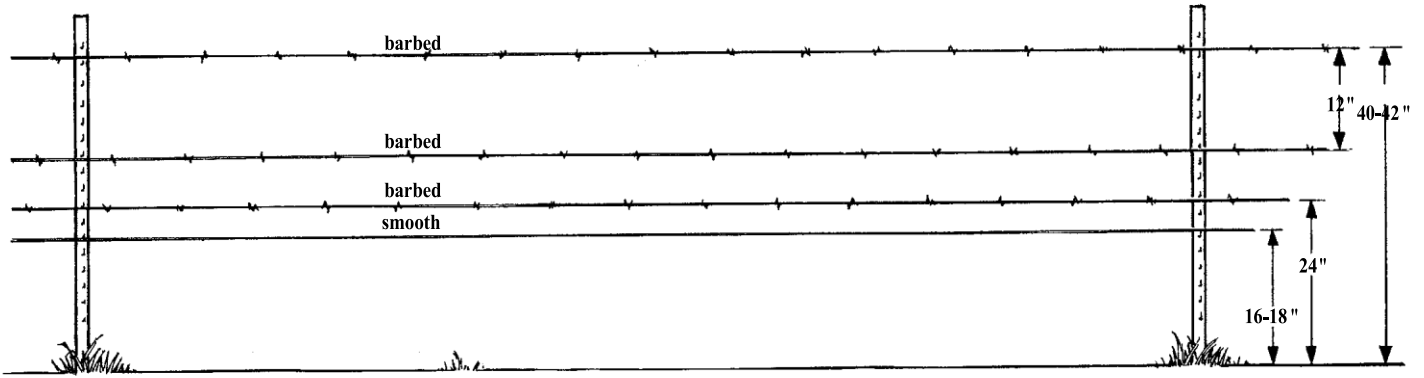
Making fences safer for big game passage and reducing habitat fragmentation are the objectives of this project. By working with our partners, MDF will identify, and assist interested private landowners with technical and financial assistance to remove, modify, or construct new fence to wildlife friendlier (WF) designs to facilitate 60+ miles of safe big game movements and habitat connectivity over a 5-year period in western North Dakota. Total project costs including match will be \$1,400,571.



Pronghorn expend valuable energy in late winter trying to bypass a woven wire fence used to contain sheep. The prairie speedsters never adapted to leap over obstacles and are often stymied by fences as they try to reach vital habitat.

Photo: Erik Peterson

## Example of Wildlife Friendly 4-strand Fence with Bottom Smooth Wire



© LarryThorngren.com

Photo: Larry Thorngren

The friendliest fences are very visible and allow wild animals to easily jump over or slip under the wires or rails, however there are many designs to fit various applications. MFWP



Photo: Backcountry Hunters and Anglers



CoryLoecker

Mule deer succumbed due to entanglement.



Jack Jones

Moose calf tangled in fence while crossing.



Deer, elk and pronghorn readily cross post and pole sections when placed in strategic locations. MFWP – Christine Paige

**Project Duration:** Five years

**Indicate the intended schedule for drawing down OHF funds.**

The following schedule is an estimated projection. Actual drawdown schedule may differ.

- 2024/25 – Utilize available science and conduct outreach to identify priority focal areas and develop education materials. Begin enrollments and implementation. 20% OHF drawdown
- 2026 – Continue outreach, enrollments and implementation. 20% OHF drawdown
- 2027 - Continue outreach, enrollments and implementation. Evaluate progress and adjust strategies as needed. 20% OHF drawdown
- 2028 - Continue outreach, enrollments and implementation. Evaluate progress and adjust strategies as needed. 20% OHF drawdown
- 2029 - Continue outreach, enrollments and implementation. Complete all planned work and prepare final completion reports. 20% OHF drawdown

**Amount of Grant request:** \$750,000

**Total Project Costs:** \$1,400,571

Note: in-kind and indirect costs can be used for matching funds.

**Amount of Matching Funds:** \$650,571

**A minimum of 25% Match Funding is required.** Indicate if the matching funds will be in-kind, indirect or cash. Please provide verification that these matching funds are available for your project. Note that effective as of July 1, 2015 no State General Fund dollars can be used for a match unless funding was legislatively appropriated for that purpose.

Amount of Match	Funding Source	Type of Match (Cash, In-kind or Indirect)
\$125,000	MDF	Cash
\$137,500	Project Partners and Private Landowners	Cash / In-Kind (combined)
\$240,471	MDF	Indirect
\$132,600	MDF	In-Kind
\$15,000	USFWS	In-kind

### Certifications

X I certify that this application has been made with the support of the governing body and chief executive of my organization.

X I certify that if awarded grant funding none of the funding will be used for any of the exemptions noted in the back of this application.

### Narrative

#### Organization Information – Briefly summarize your organization’s history, mission, current programs and activities.

Include an overview of your organizational structure, including board, staff and volunteer involvement. (no more than 300 words)

The Mule Deer Foundation (MDF) is a non-profit corporation with its principal office located at 1785 East 1450 South, Suite 210, Clearfield, UT 84015. The mission of the Mule Deer Foundation is to *“Ensure the conservation of mule deer, black-tailed deer and their habitat”*.

Established in 1988, MDF is the only conservation group in North America dedicated to restoring, improving, and conserving mule deer and black-tailed deer and their habitat, with a focus on science and program efficiency. Our conservation programs combined with our grassroots support are the foundation of who we are as an organization. We are committed to sustaining our western deer populations by ensuring quality habitat in the areas deer need on a daily, seasonal, and yearly basis. Our conservation efforts are delivered through MDF staff and volunteers in partnership with private landowners, state and federal agencies and other non-profit organizations. MDF is also a strong voice for public access, wildlife management, and conservation policy issues. We support regulated hunting as a viable component to wildlife management and we are committed to mentoring the next generation of sportsmen and women into the traditions of hunting, shooting sports, and conservation.

MDF is managed by a fourteen-member board of directors. Board members are elected annually by our Board of Directors to serve as the foundation's key policymakers. Members serve three-year terms. Their primary role is to ensure the foundation maximizes its charge to deliver our mission. MDF national staff consists of 57 full-time employees at the executive, administrative, management and field levels. MDF has five full time staff actively working in North Dakota in the fundraising, development and conservation delivery realms.

Through its team of 28 professional conservation staff, MDF is actively working across the entirety of mule deer and black-tailed deer range to conduct research and improve habitat conditions, landscape connectivity, big game migration corridors and ecological restoration. In addition to our private land program, MDF is delivering work on public lands through state partnerships and national agreements with USFS and BLM. These agreements provide for a total of \$90,000,000 over the next 5 years to assist with habitat improvements to public lands. Over the last three years alone, MDF has delivered 334 habitat projects that resulted in 391,921 acres impacted and 171 miles of fencing improved or removed to support big game connectivity.

**Purpose of Grant – Describe the proposed project identifying how the project will meet the specific directive(s) of the Outdoor Heritage Fund Program**

Identify project goals, strategies and benefits and your timetable for implementation. Include information about the need for the project and whether there is urgency for funding. Indicate if this is a new project or if it is replacing funding that is no longer available to your organization. Identify any innovative features or processes of your project. Note: if your proposal provides funding to an individual, the names of the recipients must be reported to the Industrial Commission/Outdoor Heritage Fund. These names will be disclosed upon request.

For tree/shrub/grass plantings: provide a planting plan describing the site design, planting methods, number of trees/shrubs by species and stock size, grass species and future maintenance. A statement certifying that the applicant will adhere to USDA-NRCS tree/shrub/grass planting specifications along with the name of the governmental entity designing the planting may be substituted for a planting plan.

For projects including Section 319 funding: provide in detail the specific best management practices that will be implemented and the specific projects for which you are seeking funding.

For projects including fencing: A minimum cost share of 40% by the recipient is preferred. Include detailed information on the type of fencing to be installed, whether funding is requested for boundary fencing, new or replacement of existing fencing, and/or cross fencing.

This is a new project the Mule Deer Foundation is developing in North Dakota as part of our recently launched Great Plains Initiative. This initiative focuses on fostering collaboration with private landowners across the working landscapes of the Great Plains, from North Dakota to Texas. The initiative's purpose is to bolster the resilience of mule deer populations, enhance habitat quality, and ensure the continuity of the region's natural travel corridors while improving working land productivity and producer operations.

**Goals:** The Western Big Game Connectivity and Habitat Fragmentation project's objective is to reconfigure livestock fences on private working lands in western North Dakota that currently impact big game movements into designs that facilitate safe passage.

The goals include:

- **Minimize Harm:** Significantly reduce incidents of wildlife injuries and fatalities associated with fencing.
- **Enhance Connectivity:** Strengthen habitat connectivity to safeguard the natural migratory and travel patterns of wildlife.
- **Promote Sustainable Practices:** Advocate for sustainable agricultural practices that harmonize ranching activities with wildlife conservation efforts.

**Five-Year Plan:** Over the next five years, MDF, in partnership with agencies, local conservation groups, grazing associations, and landowners, will undertake the task of altering approximately 60+ miles of fencing. These modifications will range from complete removal & disposal of unnecessary fence to strategic adaptations or new construction, all aimed at creating a landscape that is navigable and safe for wildlife, while still serving the needs of the agricultural community.

**Strategies:** Our strategy encompasses a series of targeted actions designed to balance wildlife conservation with agricultural practices. We will initiate this by utilizing strategic partnerships with North Dakota Game and Fish Department and other conservation organizations and agencies to identify areas in western North Dakota that are crucial for pronghorn migration and those frequently traveled by other big game species such as deer, elk and moose. This prioritization allows us to concentrate efforts and resources where they are most needed. Assessing the conditions and risk posed by existing fences in these areas is our next step, utilizing the knowledge of local grazing associations, landowners, MDF volunteers and conservation partners in the region. Engaging with these entities, we plan to conduct outreach and solicit project enrollments through informational flyers distributed via local conservation offices, in addition to in-person contact. Upon enrollment, we will provide technical assistance for the selection of wildlife-friendly fence designs, offer financial incentives and contract management to facilitate the transition. While public access for hunting is not being prioritized as a requirement, private lands that are enrolled in NDGF's PLOTS program will be solicited and may receive higher consideration if fencing on those properties is known to be a proven barrier. Additionally, our partners that are presently working to improve grazing infrastructure on private lands with the purpose of enhancing wildlife habitat will provide additional opportunities for the installation or adaptation of wildlife friendly fencing at strategic locations.

**Benefits:** The multifaceted benefits of this project include the conservation of wildlife (particularly big game species), the economic sustainability of ranching, agriculture and local communities, and the fostering of community engagement in conservation efforts. This project is driven by the urgent need to conserve big game populations, support the economic viability of landowners and communities, and create a lasting conservation legacy. It represents a commitment to responsible land management and a model for collaborative conservation efforts.

***Innovative Features and Processes:*** Wildlife-friendly (WF) fencing is a dynamic field, with numerous adaptations specifically designed to balance agricultural operations with wildlife conservation. The process of upgrading to WF fencing is not only beneficial for wildlife but also adds aesthetic value to the landscape.

Features and processes we will utilize include:

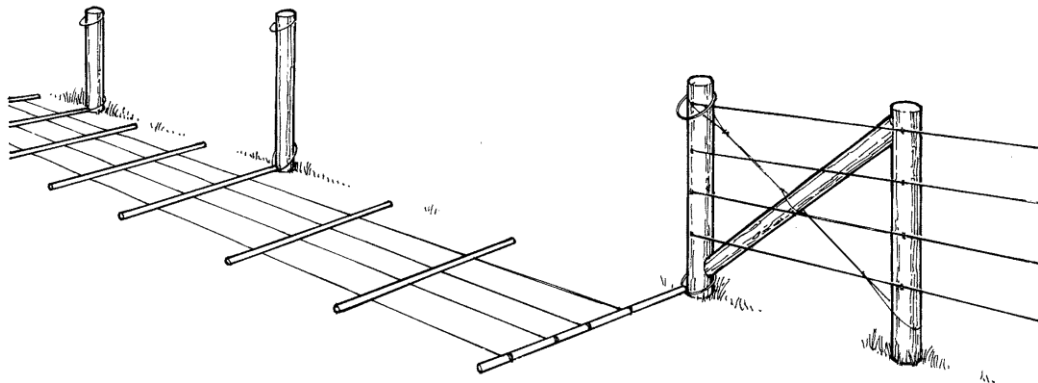
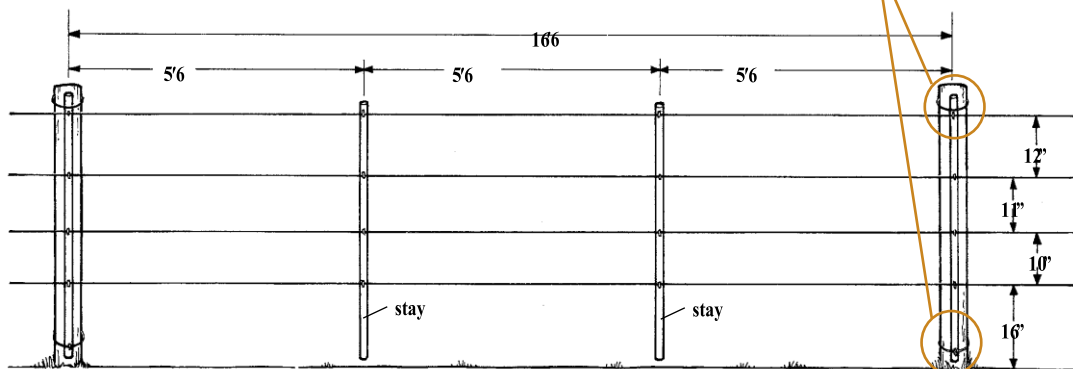
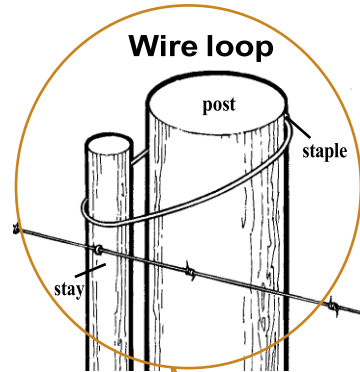
- **Utilization of science:** NDGF collected data for big game movements will be used to map and identify focus areas.
- **Removal and Modification:** Outdated and unnecessary fences can be completely removed, while those in good condition may be modified by adjusting wire spacing to facilitate wildlife movement.
- **Design Innovations:** Fence in significant disrepair will be replaced with new structures built to WF specifications, incorporating the latest design innovations for maximum effectiveness and minimal environmental impact.
- **Migration Accommodations:** “Lay-down” sections may be installed strategically in known travel corridors to provide open passages for species like pronghorn during winter migrations, or for elk in areas where chronic fence collisions and damage occur.
- **Customized Solutions:** Given the diverse needs of ranching and agricultural operations, WF fencing offers a variety of adaptations and designs to suit virtually any scenario. We may utilize smooth wire, barbed wire, electric, post/pole or any combination of techniques to effectively fit the scenario.
- **Smooth Wire Integration:** The integration of smooth wire at the base of multi-strand barbed wire fences has proven highly effective for species like pronghorn, which typically prefer to crawl under rather than leap over fences. This is a simple adaptation that may be utilized.
- **Strategic Spacing:** Fence strand spacing is adapted to accommodate different livestock operations, with special attention to the height of the bottom wire and the spacing between the top two strands to ensure safe passage for wildlife while maintaining the integrity of the fence for livestock containment.

These enhancements to traditional fencing practices not only improve the safety and well-being of wildlife but also contribute to the sustainability of agricultural lands, ensuring that both wildlife and landowners benefit from these innovative conservation efforts. By adopting these practices, we can create a landscape that supports both agricultural productivity and ecological diversity

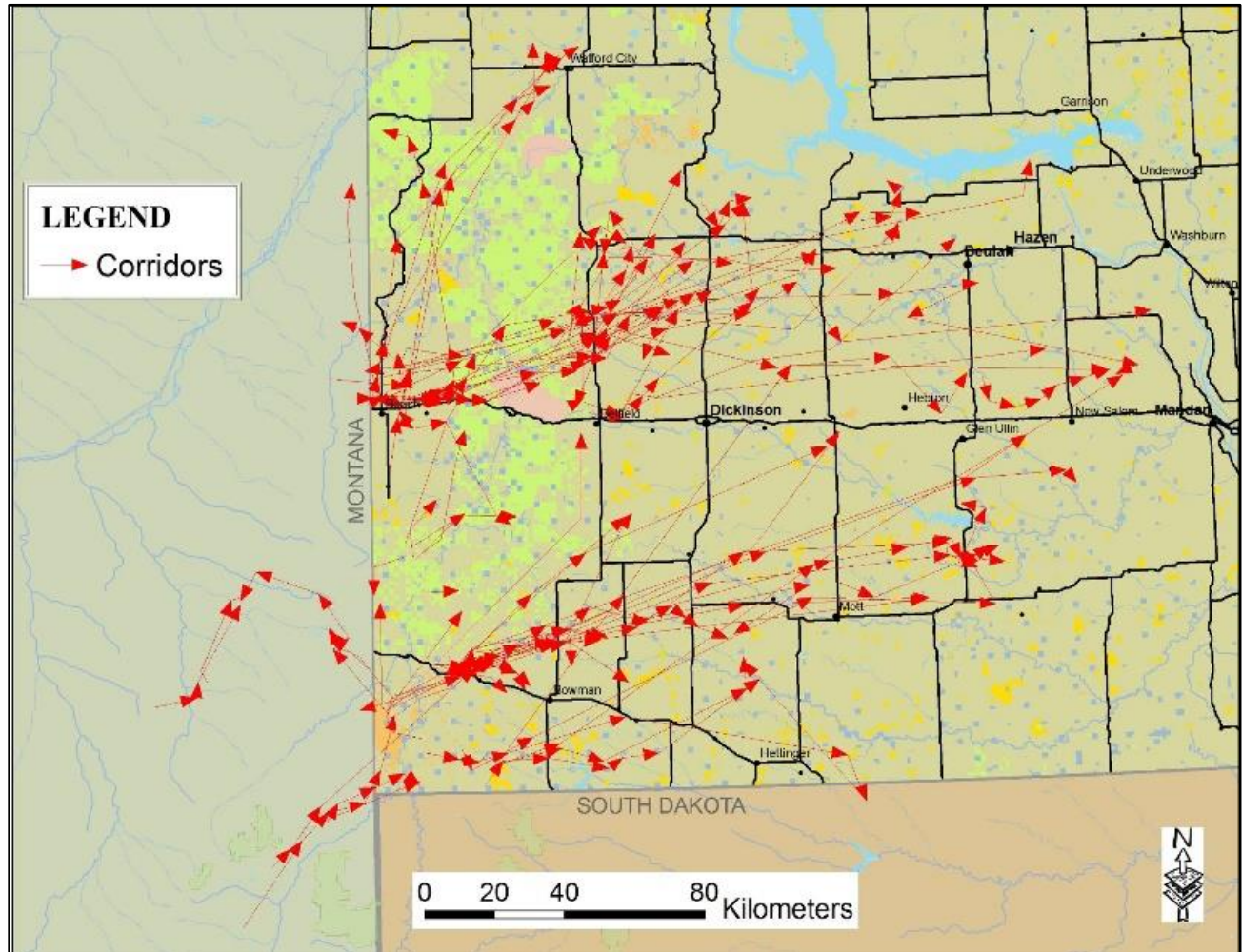
## Example of Lay Down Fence

A lay-down fence is a standard 3-wire or 4-wire fence that can be laid on the ground as a unit to allow ungulates to pass through during migration or seasonal use. A lay-down fence can also reduce snow and wildlife damage and save maintenance costs. Most designs allow a single person working alone to let the fence down or put it back up.

Lay-down fence can be constructed from smooth wire or barbed wire. Fence posts can be wooden or steel, but wood is more durable in heavy snow areas.



## Pronghorn Migration Data



Known pronghorn migration and travel movements in western North Dakota. NDGF

### ***Timetable for Implementation:***

**Year 1:** Partner with NDGF to identify critical movement areas. Assess fence conditions for risk in priority areas. Develop informational flyers. Begin planning, outreach, enrollments, design and implementation.

**Year 2 - 5:** Continue with outreach, enrollments, design and implementation.

**Year 5:** Complete end of grant report.

**Each Year-End:** Evaluate progress and adjust strategies as needed. Complete and submit annual reports.

This schedule is designed to ensure that each phase of the project builds upon the last, with continuous assessment and adaptation to meet the project's goals effectively. It's important to note that actual timelines may vary based on factors such as weather conditions, contractor availability and coordination with landowner operations.

Is this project part of a Comprehensive Conservation Plan?  Yes  No

If yes, provide a copy with the application.

*Note: Projects involving buildings and infrastructure will only be considered if part of a Comprehensive Conservation Plan. Please refer to the "Definitions" section at the back of the form for more details.*

**Management of Project – Provide a description of how you will manage and oversee the project to ensure it is carried out on schedule and in a manner that best ensures its objectives will be met.**

Include a brief background and work experience for those managing the project.

Mule Deer Foundation (MDF) will manage, coordinate and administer the grant, and provide guidance for the Western Big Game Connectivity and Habitat Fragmentation project. To ensure the successful completion of the project, MDF will work with our delivery partners to put into place a project management plan. The plan will start with a clear definition of the project's objectives, focusing on the identification of critical areas, and installation of wildlife-friendly fences through outreach and volunteer private land enrollments. The scope of the project will be outlined, including the tasks to be completed, the focal areas of land involved, and the deliverables at each project phase. A comprehensive timeline will be established, marking milestones for outreach, properties enrolled (through term agreements), design and contract development, implementation and subsequent quality checks. A budget will be prepared to cover all costs, ensuring that materials, labor, and any unexpected expenses are accounted for.

Collin Smith, MDF Director of Private Land Conservation will serve as the primary grant administrator. Collin is a certified wildlife biologist with 34 years' experience in wildlife management and conservation delivery, and 15 years' experience working in North Dakota with agency staff and conservation partners. Casey Nordine, MDF's Dakota Grasslands Habitat Coordinator will be responsible for managing the delivery of individual projects at the field level. Casey has been working in the region for 5 years, and will coordinate outreach efforts, strategic prioritization of project selection and collaboration among our North Dakota conservation partners assisting with delivery, to ensure the most beneficial property locations are selected and project development and management keeps on track. MDF also has 3 other full time staff members and several volunteer teams residing and operating in the state. Additionally, Ron Ness, a former member of the MDF Board of Directors and current ND Petroleum Council CEO will assist in coordinating cooperative partnership field days involving North Dakota Petroleum Foundation and MDF volunteers in assisting landowners with fencing projects. At times, these additional resources may provide planning, identification of project opportunities and valuable assistance to the partnership.

Engagement with stakeholders is crucial for the project's success. This will involve close coordination with conservation partners, landowners, and local communities to ensure that everyone's objectives are aligned and that there is broad support for the project. A communication plan will be established to keep all stakeholders informed about the project's progress and to address any issues that may arise promptly.

The management of resources is another critical component of the plan. A skilled team with experience in wildlife management, grazing improvements and conservation program delivery

and management will be assembled. Staff from partner agencies and organizations will also assist with these efforts. There will also be a focus on developing a network of fencing contractors capable of high-quality work, necessary to carry out construction. At times, MDF volunteers, partnerships, and landowners may be involved in fence deconstruction.

Risk management will involve identifying potential risks, such as delays due to weather or supply chain issues, contractor availability, producer operations regarding livestock management schedules and developing strategies to mitigate these risks. The project will employ an adaptive management approach, remaining flexible and ready to adjust plans based on ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the project's progress.

Quality assurance will be maintained by adhering to the best practices and guidelines for wildlife-friendly fencing. Inspections and assessments during construction will be conducted to ensure that the fences meet design specifications and effectively serve their intended purpose.

Finally, thorough documentation of all project activities will be kept, including financial records and progress reports. Transparent reporting to OHF will be provided, highlighting the project's achievements and any lessons learned. This structured approach will help keep the project on schedule and ensure that its objectives are met.

### **Evaluation – Describe your plan to document progress and results.**

Please be specific on the methods you will utilize to measure success. Note that regular reporting, final evaluation and expenditure reports will be required for every grant awarded.

To effectively document progress and evaluate the results of the project, an evaluation plan will be put into action. This plan will involve capturing photographs to visually record the field work and fence modifications, both before and after the project's implementation. Detailed activity logs will be kept tracking the progress, such as the number of properties enrolled, location of fences replaced or adapted, types of modification styles implemented, and total miles impacted. Maps indicating locations of fence improvements will be developed. Additionally, regular input from conservation partners and landowners will be sought to gauge their satisfaction and to incorporate their feedback for ongoing improvements.

The success of the project will be measured through various methods. Wildlife movement and safety may be monitored using camera traps in specific known crossing locations and observational studies to understand the impact of the new fences. The durability of the fences will be assessed at intervals to ensure they are performing as expected over time.

Reporting will form a core part of grant administration. Annual reports will detail the progress made, outline any challenges encountered, and describe the solutions implemented to address those challenges. Detailed expenditure reports will also be prepared to provide full transparency and accountability for the funds used throughout the project. An end of grant evaluation report will summarize the project's overall outcomes, the effectiveness of the fencing solutions, and their impact on conservation efforts. These reports will not only track the project's progress but will also offer valuable insights for future work.

## Financial Information

**Project Budget – Use the table below to provide an itemized list of project expenses and describe the matching funds being utilized for this project.**

Indicate if the matching funds are in the form of cash, indirect costs or in-kind services. The budget should identify all other committed funding sources and the amount of funding from each source. **A minimum of 25% match funding is required.** An application will be scored higher the greater the amount of match funding provided. (See Scoring Form.)

Certain values have been identified for in-kind services as detailed under “Budget Information” at the back of this form. Refer to that section and utilize these values in identifying your matching funds.

**NOTE: No indirect costs will be funded. Supporting documentation for project expenses, including bids, must be included or application will be considered incomplete.**

Project Expense	OHF Request	Applicant's Match Share (Cash)	Applicant's Match Share (In-Kind)	Applicant's Match Share (Indirect)	Other Project Sponsor's Share	Total Each Project Expense
Labor and Materials (1)	\$711,500	\$125,000			\$137,500	\$974,000
Outreach (2)	\$1,000					\$1,000
Field Staff Match (3)			\$102,600		\$15,000	\$117,600
Partial Staffing Costs (4)	\$37,500					\$37,500
Administration (5)			\$30,000	\$240,471		\$270,471
<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>\$750,000</b>	<b>\$125,000</b>	<b>\$132,600</b>	<b>\$240,471</b>	<b>\$152,500</b>	<b>\$1,400,571</b>

Note: Costs for seeding, fencing, pipelines, wells, and cover crops cannot exceed NRCS Field Office Tech Guide without justification. Projects involving perimeter fencing must follow NRCS eligibility standards.

**Budget Narrative – Use the space below to provide additional detail regarding project expenses.**

OHF will provide 73% cost share on all aspects of wildlife friendly fence implementation activities. Applicant and landowner will provide 27%. OHF funds will also be used for educational information development, project signage and partial support of MDF field staffing.

### **NOTE: Cost Variability in Fence Modifications**

Due to the diverse range of fence modifications and designs tailored to specific operational requirements, the associated costs are anticipated to differ significantly across individual landowner projects. The most expensive activity is typically the complete teardown and reconstruction of fencing. On average, the current cost for this process is \$3.00 per linear foot for a four-strand, wildlife-friendly fence design. This average is composed of \$0.50 per linear foot for deconstruction and \$2.50 per linear foot for construction.

## Project Expense Categories:

1. Labor and Materials - All expenses related to contracted fence work, such as removal and disposal of unnecessary fencing, modification of existing fence to meet WF design standards, new construction to WF specifications, or adjustments to fencing in known established high travel or migration paths to create temporary lay-down sections or post/pole crossovers. It includes cash from MDF private landowners and the ND Petroleum Foundation, and in-kind value contributions for labor provided by private landowners and volunteers. NRCS cost share values will be applied when determining in-kind value for 4 strand and high tensile fence construction and fence deconstruction. OHF hourly labor allowances will be applied to WF designs not documented in NRCS Field Office Tech Guide. Total - \$974,000
2. Outreach – Includes expenses linked to the creation and distribution of educational material, flyers and project signage. Total - \$1,000
3. Field Staff Match – Includes costs associated with field coordination consisting of salaries, travel expenses and mileage. These costs will be in-kind contributions from MDF & project partners. Total - \$117,600
  - MDF Cost (5 years) - \$102,600 In-Kind
  - USFWS Cost (5 years) - \$15,000 In-Kind
4. Partial Staffing Costs - MDF staff will be required to travel considerable distances and incur significant costs over the 5-year grant performance period. MDF requests the allowable 5% of the total OHF award to help cover these expenses. Total -\$37,500
5. Administration - Includes the combined administrative and indirect costs that MDF will incur for grant management and reporting over the grant's 5-year duration. MDF Project Manager - \$30,000; MDF Indirect rate 21% - \$240,411; Total Administrative Cost - \$270,471 (Note: indirect rate is not charged to partner field staff match)

### **Special Request for OHF Consideration:**

The Mule Deer Foundation acknowledges OHF's standard requirement for private landowners to cover 40% of project costs and that fencing expenses should not exceed the NRCS Field Office Technical Guidelines unless justified. Furthermore, perimeter fencing projects must adhere to NRCS's eligibility criteria. However, given that this project's benefits significantly favor North Dakota's big game species, we propose a reduction in the private landowner's financial commitment to 27% of the total implementation costs, to include combined partnership cash and In-Kind match. We believe that voluntary landowners who are willing to convert their fences to wildlife-friendly designs deserve encouragement through lesser financial obligations. Moreover, the NRCS guidelines do not detail specific actions or costs for implementing many wildlife-friendly fencing activities, such as removal, alterations, or modifications. Perimeter fencing is also essential for ensuring the safe movement of wildlife across the landscape. Therefore, we request that the NRCS's eligibility standards be reconsidered for aspects of this project. This request is made to facilitate landowner participation and support the overarching goal of wildlife conservation through improved fencing practices.

**Sustainability – Indicate how the project will be funded or sustained in future years.**

Include information on the sustainability of this project after OHF funds have been expended and whether the sustainability will be in the form of ongoing management or additional funding from a different source.

The MDF mandates that participating landowners enter into legally binding agreements. These contracts will stipulate the ongoing maintenance and management of fencing, with the duration of terms varying based on the level of support and activities undertaken. All associated costs and responsibilities for maintenance will rest exclusively with the cooperating landowners. Following the project's completion, MDF will assess the project's effectiveness and determine the continued interest and necessity for further action. As part of the Great Plains Initiative, it is anticipated that MDF will forge new partnerships and acquire additional funding to bolster big game connectivity in North Dakota, thereby amplifying the impact of this vital conservation effort within the state.

**Partial Funding – Indicate how the project will be affected if less funding is available than requested.**

In the event partial funding is granted, the project's scope and scale would be adjusted to align with the available budget. While the core objectives will remain intact, the following changes may be necessary:

- Fencing Improvements: The extent of fencing modifications and accomplishments will be reduced. Priority will be given to individual projects with the highest impact on wildlife movement, deferring work in less critical areas.
- Outreach: The production of educational materials may be limited, with a reduction in printed materials to minimize costs.
- Field Staffing: Travel for fieldwork may be curtailed, focusing on essential trips only. Reliance on in-kind contributions from project partners will increase to compensate for reduced funding.

Overall, the project will proceed with a focus on maximizing the impact of each dollar spent, ensuring that even with reduced funding, significant progress can be made towards the project's conservation goals. The MDF remains committed to adapting its strategies to work within the funding parameters while striving to achieve the desired outcomes.

**Partnership Recognition - If you are a successful recipient of Outdoor Heritage Fund dollars, how would you recognize the Outdoor Heritage Fund partnership? *\* There must be signage at the location of the project acknowledging OHF funding when appropriate.***

Recognition of the Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF) partnership is a crucial aspect of our project's success. If awarded OHF dollars, we would honor this partnership through the following measures:

- **Prominent Signage:** We will install durable, visible signs at appropriate project sites with landowner permission to acknowledge the OHF's financial support. These signs will be strategically placed to ensure they are seen by visitors or public, such as boundary fences near public right of ways, thereby highlighting the OHF's commitment to conservation.
- **Public Announcements:** During official events, press releases, and public gatherings related to the project, we will formally recognize the OHF's contribution.
- **Digital Acknowledgment:** The OHF logo and a statement of appreciation will be featured on our website, magazine, social media platforms, and in digital newsletters.
- **Printed Materials:** Educational materials, reports, and promotional flyers will include recognition of the OHF partnership.
- **Events and Workshops:** At all related events, we will verbally express our gratitude for the OHF's support.

By implementing these measures, we aim to ensure that the OHF's partnership is recognized and appreciated by all stakeholders in accordance with the fund's guidelines and when appropriate. This acknowledgment not only reflects our gratitude but also raises awareness of the OHF's vital role in supporting conservation projects.

**Awarding of Grants - Review the appropriate sample contract for your organization on the website at <http://www.nd.gov/ndic/outdoor-infopage.htm>.**

Can you meet all the provisions of the sample contract? X Yes  No

If there are provisions in that contract that your organization is unable to meet, please indicate below what those provisions would be:

## **ABOUT OHF:**

The purpose of the North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund is to provide funding to state agencies, tribal governments, political subdivisions, and nonprofit organizations, with higher priority given to projects that enhance **conservation** practices in this state by:

**Directive A.** Providing access to private and public lands for sportsmen, including projects that create fish and wildlife habitat and provide access for sportsmen;

**Directive B.** Improving, maintaining and restoring water quality, soil conditions, plant diversity, animal systems and by supporting other practices of stewardship to enhance farming and ranching;

**Directive C.** Developing, enhancing, conserving and restoring wildlife and fish habitat on private and public lands; and

**Directive D.** Conserving natural areas and creating other areas for recreation through the establishment and development of parks and other recreation areas.

## **EXEMPTIONS**

Outdoor Heritage Fund grants may not be used to finance the following:

- Litigation;
- Lobbying activities;
- Any activity that would interfere, disrupt, or prevent activities associated with surface coal mining operations; sand, gravel, or scoria extraction activities; oil and gas operations; or other energy facility or infrastructure development;
- The acquisition of land or to encumber any land for a term longer than twenty years; or
- Projects outside this state or projects that are beyond the scope of defined activities that fulfill the purposes of Chapter 54-17.8 of the North Dakota Century Code.

OHF funds may not be used, except after a finding of exceptional circumstances by the Industrial Commission, to finance:

- A completed project or project commenced before the grant application is submitted;
- A feasibility or research study;
- Maintenance costs;
- A paving project for a road or parking lot;
- A swimming pool or aquatic park;
- Personal property that is not affixed to the land;
- Playground equipment, except that grant funds may be provided for up to 25% of the cost of the equipment not exceeding \$10,000 per project and all playground equipment grants may not exceed 5% of the total grants per year (see Definitions/Clarifications for how this will be calculated);
- Staffing or outside consultants except for costs for staffing or an outside consultant to design and implement an approved project based on the documented need of the applicant and the expenditures may not exceed 5% of the grant to a grantee if the grant exceeds \$250,000 and expenditures may not exceed 10% of the grant to a grantee if the grant is \$250,000 or less (see Definitions/Clarifications for how this will be calculated);

- A building except for a building that is included as part of a comprehensive conservation plan for a new or expanded recreational project (see Definitions/Clarifications for definition of comprehensive conservation plan and new or expanded recreational project); or
- A project in which the applicant is not directly involved in the execution and completion of the project.

The goal of the Industrial Commission is that at a minimum 15% of the funding received for a biennium will be given priority for recreation projects that meet Directive D.

The following projects are not eligible for funding, unless there is a finding of exceptional circumstances by the Industrial Commission include:

- Construction or refurbishment of indoor/outdoor ice rinks,
- Construction or refurbishment of indoor/outdoor athletic courts and sports fields,
- Other substantially similar facilities.
- Infrastructure that is not part of a comprehensive conservation plan.
- Projects not meeting a minimum funding request of \$2,500.

## **Budget Information**

In-kind services used to match the request for Outdoor Heritage Fund dollars shall be valued as follows:

- Labor costs \$15.00 an hour
- Land costs Average rent costs for the county as shown in the most recent publication of the USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Services, North Dakota Field Office
- Permanent Equipment Any equipment purchased must be listed separately with documentation showing actual cost. (For example: playground equipment)
- Equipment usage Actual documentation
- Seed & Seedlings Actual documentation
- Transportation Mileage at federal rate
- Supplies & materials Actual documentation

More categories will be added as we better understand the types of applications that will be submitted. We will use as our basis for these standards other State and Federal programs that have established rates. For example, the North Dakota Nonpoint Source Pollution Management Program has established rates. If your project includes work that has an established rate under another State Program, please use those rates and note your source.

## **Definitions/Clarifications:**

**Building** - Defined as "A structure with a roof either with walls or without walls and is attached to the ground in a permanent nature."

**Comprehensive Conservation Plan** - Defined as "A detailed plan that has been formally adopted by the governing board which includes goals and objectives--both short and long term, must show how this building will enhance the overall conservation goals of the project and the protection or preservation of wildlife and fish habitat or natural areas." This does not need to be a complex multi-page document. It could be included as a part of the application or be an attachment.

**New and Expanded Recreational Project** means that the proposed building cannot be a replacement of a current building. The proposed building must also be related to either a new or expanded

recreational project--either an expansion in land or an expansion of an existing building or in the opportunities for recreation at the project site.

Playground equipment calculation - Only the actual costs of the playground equipment (a bid or invoice showing the amount of the equipment costs must be provided) - cannot include freight or installation or surface materials or removal of old equipment, etc.

Staffing/Outside Consultants Costs - If you are requesting OHF funding for staffing or for an outside consultant, you must provide information in your application on the need for OHF funding to cover these costs. For example, if you are an entity that has engineering staff you must explain why you don't have sufficient staff to do the work or if specific expertise is needed or whatever the reason is for your entity to retain an outside consultant. If it is a request for reimbursement for staff time then a written explanation is required in the application of why OHF funding is needed to pay for the costs of that staff member(s)' time. **The budget form must reflect on a separate line item the specific amount that is being requested for staffing and/or the hiring of an outside consultant.** This separate line item will then be used to make the calculation of 5% or 10% as outlined in the law. Note that the calculation will be made on the grant less the costs for the consultant or staff.

Maintenance – Activities that preserve or keep infrastructure in a given existing condition, including repairs. Repair means to restore to sound condition after damage, to renew or refresh; except repairs due to damage caused by Acts of God.

## Scoring of Grants

**Oral Presentation.** Please note that you will be given an opportunity to make a ten-minute Oral Presentation at a meeting of the Outdoor Heritage Fund Advisory Board. These presentations are strongly encouraged.

**Open Record.** Please note that your application and any attachments will be open records as defined by law and will be posted on the Industrial Commission/Outdoor Heritage Fund website.

All applications will be scored by the Outdoor Heritage Fund Advisory Board after your ten-minute oral presentation. The ranking form that will be used by the Board is available on the website at <http://www.nd.gov/ndic/outdoor-infopage.htm> .

## Awarding of Grants

All decisions on requests will be reported to applicants no later than 30 days after Industrial Commission consideration. The Commission can set a limit on duration of an offer on each application or if there isn't a specific date indicated in the application for implementation of the project, then the applicant has until the next Outdoor Heritage Fund Advisory Board regular meeting to sign the contract and get the project underway or the commitment for funding will be terminated and the applicant may resubmit for funding. Applicants whose proposals have been approved will receive a contract outlining the terms and conditions of the grant.

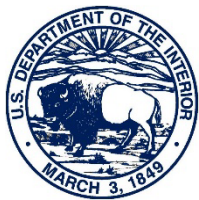
## Responsibility of Recipient

The recipient of any grant from the Industrial Commission must use the funds awarded for the specific purpose described in the grant application and in accordance with the contract. The

recipient cannot use any of the funds for the purposes stated under Exemptions on the first page of this application.

If you have any questions about the application, the Commission can be reached at 701-328-3722 or [outdoorheritage@nd.gov](mailto:outdoorheritage@nd.gov).

Revised: November 4, 2019, April 12, 2023



# United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
North Dakota Partners for Fish and Wildlife Office  
3425 Miriam Avenue  
Bismarck, North Dakota 58501



In Reply Refer to:  
FWS/R6

August 12, 2024

Reice Haase, Deputy Executive Director  
North Dakota Industrial Commission  
ATTN: Outdoor Heritage Fund Program  
600 East Boulevard Ave., Dept. 405  
Bismarck, ND 58505

RE: Western Big Game Connectivity and Habitat Fragmentation

Dear Mr. Haase:

The US Fish and Wildlife Service's North Dakota Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW) program fully supports the Western Big Game Connectivity and Habitat Fragmentation OHF grant proposal. The USFWS has a long history of working closely with private landowners, providing financial and technical assistance on voluntary conservation efforts to restore, and enhance grassland and wetland habitat on private land. The ND PFW program works closely with private landowners to foster partnerships on working lands that help conserve important wildlife habitat and provide economic benefits for North Dakota's farmers and ranchers and other private landowners. Our approach is simple: Engage willing partners through non-regulatory incentives to conserve fish and wildlife values on their property. The ND PFW program was established in 1987 and since that time has worked on more than 4,200 habitat projects with more than 3,200 North Dakota farmers, ranchers and other private landowners.

The ND PFW program stands ready to assist our partners at the Mule Deer Foundation and work with willing landowners across SW North Dakota to deliver the Western Big Game Connectivity and Habitat Fragmentation OHF grant. The ND PFW program is providing \$15,000 of in-kind match for ND PFW staff to assist with the delivery. This effort will provide opportunities for landowners to install fencing solutions that encourage habitat connectivity, are safer for big game passage, yet remain effective for managing livestock. We know through experience that there is demand for wildlife friendly fencing across SW ND and feel strongly that this project will be successful, if approved for funding.

Sincerely,

Scott McLeod  
U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
ND Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, State Coordinator



August 16, 2024

Reice Haase, Deputy Executive Director  
North Dakota Industrial Commission  
ATTN: Outdoor Heritage Fund Program  
600 East Boulevard Ave., Dept. 405  
Bismarck, ND 58505

RE: Western Big Game Connectivity and Habitat Fragmentation

Dear Mr. Haase:

Please accept this letter on behalf of North Dakota Game and Fish Department (NDGF) stating our support of the Western Big Game Connectivity and Habitat Fragmentation grant proposal. Fences not constructed to wildlife friendly specifications present challenges to big game movements and cause mortality from animals becoming entangled in fences. Research completed in 2009 documented largescale seasonal movements of pronghorn up to 160 miles. Pronghorn make long distance movements especially in severe winters to find open food sources for survival. We have also documented mortalities of mule deer, white-tailed deer, pronghorn, and bighorn sheep from being entangled in fences.

The NDGF works closely with private landowners and conservation partners to enhance wildlife habitat across the state. We are committed to assisting the Mule Deer Foundation provide information to landowners looking to construct wildlife friendly fences that will benefit our state's big game populations. We hope the Western Big Game Connectivity and Habitat Fragmentation grant will be approved through the Outdoor Heritage Fund Program. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bruce Stillings". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bruce Stillings  
Big Game Supervisor, North Dakota Game and Fish



August 21, 2024

Reice Haase, Deputy Director  
North Dakota Industrial Commission  
ATTN: Outdoor Heritage Fund Program  
600 East Boulevard Ave., Dept. 405  
Bismarck, ND 58505

Re: Western Big Game Connectivity and Habitat Fragmentation

Dear. Mr. Haase:

Please accept this letter on behalf of the North Dakota Petroleum Foundation (NDPF) expressing support for the Western Big Game Connectivity and Habitat Fragmentation grant proposal. This initiative perfectly aligns with our core values and commitment to embracing responsible practices, fostering innovation, and advancing conservation efforts to safeguard North Dakota's natural resources for future generations.

At the NDPF, we are deeply committed to responsible stewardship of our natural resources. Our core values emphasize the importance of balancing resource development with environmental conservation. The Mule Deer Foundation's (MDF) program embodies this balance by applying innovative solutions to challenges and integrating conservation with practical, on-the-ground efforts. Supporting such initiatives aligns seamlessly with our mission to safeguard North Dakota's natural heritage while fostering sustainable progress in both the energy and agriculture industries.

The MDF has been a crucial partner in our conservation endeavors. We have been proud sponsors of Foundation events and remain committed to providing funds, manpower and in-kind use and access to equipment. We appreciate the MDF's dedication to innovative practices that drive positive change for wildlife and their habitats. As we look to the future, we are excited to continue our partnership and support not only the Western Big Game Connectivity and Habitat Fragmentation Project but also other initiatives that contribute to the long-term health and resilience of our natural resources.

We appreciate your consideration for this program and hope we can count on your support. Together, we can advance our shared goal of responsible resource management and conservation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tessa". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over the printed name.

Tessa Sandstrom  
Executive Director

P.O. BOX 7233  
BISMARCK, ND 58507

701.557.3972

INFO@NDPETROLEUMFOUNDATION.ORG  
WWW.NDPETROLEUMFOUNDATION.ORG

