



State Spotlight NORTH DAKOTA

By Marshall Johnson - North Dakota Director

Another banquet season has passed on the prairies and badlands of North Dakota. Mule Deer Foundation volunteers once again broke records in fundraising and increased our impact on habitat. In 2015, the Mule Deer Foundation was awarded a \$480,000 Outdoor Heritage Fund grant (OHF) for their Western North Dakota Habitat Enhancement Program. This program works with landowners that are enrolled or willing to enroll their property into the Private Lands Open To Sportsmen program (PLOTS) where MDF works with the landowners to improve, enhance or rehabilitate habitat. Working with the landowner and North Dakota Game and Fish Department (NDGF) biologists, we identify what can be done on the land to improve it for wildlife and

the landowner's operational goals. The landowner benefits, the sportsmen and women benefit with the access, and of course our mule deer and other wildlife benefit as well.

Since last summer, 2016, MDF chapters in North Dakota set a goal to double our PLOTS (Private Land Open To Sportsman) support, with a target of over 50,000 acres. Mission accomplished!!!! Today MDF supports 52,127 PLOTS acres in western ND and agreements were signed for access to be open from three to ten years. The Outdoor Heritage Funds have helped us leverage PLOTS with habitat improvement projects, but it is the State Mule Deer Tag raffle that provides us the funds to support the PLOTS agreements.

This fall we will begin selling the 2018 statewide mule deer tag raffle and in January you will receive in the mail an opportunity to invest in PLOTS as well. I say invest, as your purchase of these raffle tickets is supporting access for you and others in North Dakota. Basically, for every \$1.00-\$2.00 raised, that is an acre of PLOTS that we can sponsor for ND sportsman and women. For those that live in central and eastern ND, for every dollar that we sponsor in western ND (prime mule deer habitat) that is \$1 that the ND Game & Fish can allocate to central and eastern ND.

We are leveraging NDGF's budgeted dollars to secure more PLOTS acreage statewide then what NDGF is budgeted for, a win for the entire state.



?????????? You Can Do One Or 3 Separate Captions ????????

The North Dakota Game and Fish Private Lands biologists have been working hard visiting landowners that may have interest in PLOTS and are introducing MDF's habitat enhancement program funded by the Outdoor Heritage Fund and MDF chapter funds. In 2016 & 2017, the Mule Deer Foundation invested OHF and Chapter Rewards on five habitat projects that directly impacted 2,989 acres in habitat restoration/improvement and another five projects installing wildlife friendly fencing and water development. In addition, MDF chapters granted funds to five youth shooting programs and the ND state NASP tournament (National Archery in Schools Program). Total funds granted during this period came to \$145,959 and we are looking at some additional projects and PLOTS opportunities this fall.

A lot of hard work goes into raising funds for mule deer habitat thru banquets and raffles. Raising funds for habitat is our core mission but putting boots on the ground increases that impact tremendously. By "Boots on the Ground", we mean volunteers working physically on habitat projects or coaching and mentoring our youth in our shooting galleries and events. This past July, 15 MDF volunteers along with volunteers from RMEF, ND Petroleum Council and Doosan/Bobcat pulled over eight miles of fence and posts on the Richard Ranch north of Beach, ND. These past two years MDF has been working with Byron Richard on improving the habitat for wildlife and livestock in return for 10 years of access thru the ND PLOTS program. Pulling old barbed wire, reducing the number of fences, replacing barbed wire with wildlife friendly fences and developing water sites augments the infrastructure

of the ranch that will assist the landowner by balancing livestock production with wildlife-friendly grazing techniques, and improving riparian health by limiting livestock exposure to parts of Beaver Creek. "Without the volunteer work these past two summers and the funds granted to complete these improvements, it would have taken us ten years to do this." Richard continued "In two short years we are already seeing a significant improvement to the habitat in which the deer, elk and other critters will benefit from."

Muscle and sweat exerted by volunteers was greatly enhanced by the use of equipment from industry partner Doosan. Doosan donated the use of three bobcats with various attachments, a payloader, an extended trac-hoe and four Bobcat UTV's.

This equipment allowed volunteers to pull eight miles of barbed wire fencing, pulling the posts and other debris all in a day and a half! Al Gunwall, ND State Chair, described the event, "It was warm, it was dusty but the volunteers had fun." Gunwall continued, "visiting with the volunteers, they are into seeing



where those raised funds are going and being a part of it.

Over the past two summers we have been able to see the fruits of our labor and the impact it is having with the wildlife. Last summer we saw a few deer and turkeys, this summer we saw elk, deer and other critters due to the improved habitat. It really helps you understand how fund raising for habitat can affect the landscape."

Volunteers are not only working habitat, but they are also working with North Dakota youth thru our MULEY program and our Mobile Activity Trailer. This year, thru a grant from the North Dakota Petroleum Council, MDF-ND added a much needed tool to our youth arsenal, a 14' tandem axel trailer. The Northern Badlands Chapter (Bismarck) led the charge on obtaining a trailer that could be used at M.U.L.E.Y. events and other civic events where youth are present. Corbett Schollmeyer, NBC Chapter Chair, coined the term Mobile Activity Trailer as he envisioned this trailer to hold everything volunteers would need to host youth shooting opportunities and more.



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Arnold Karsky, ND Youth Coordinator loves the trailer, "Frees my garage up!" Karsky continues "what is great about this trailer is the ability for any MDF volunteer to grab the trailer and take it to an event in their area." The ND M.U.L.E.Y program now has a rolling billboard on the highways and events throughout North Dakota and there is space for five more sponsors on the trailer. This year, the trailers debut was at the MULEY days hosted by the Northern Badlands Chapter back in July. Karsky took it from there and has since hit both Bakken Cookfests in Westhope and Medora, the NDPC annual fishing derby and a private company event. Coming up on September 24th is the Teddy Roosevelt Days in Bismarck at McDowell Dam where we will be running the pellet gun booth in front of 1500 plus kids. Arnold Karsky explains the private company event, "MBI has been a major sponsor at our Teddy Roosevelt Chapter banquet every year and they approached us after seeing what we have been doing with our pellet and archery ranges." Karsky continued "MBI is expecting several hundred people at their company event and saw the opportunity for the kids and in return for our volunteers work, is making a donation to the TR Chapter in addition to their banquet donation." Our exposure at city and commercial events has really caught the attention of people and we have seen an increase in attendance to our banquets as well as some people have raised their had to become a volunteer due to our MULEY commitment.



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As you can see from this past year, it is all about the Volunteers that make things happen for the Mule Deer Foundations mission. We currently have seven chapters in North Dakota and we are looking to add a few more as well as we need to add volunteers to our existing chapters. Several of our chapters are running with two to three volunteers and we need your help! Any time that a person can commit, benefits the chapter and if you have an interest, please contact a chapter representative or myself.

On another note, I will be relocating back to North Dakota so that I can provide more support as well as develop new chapters in ND and SD. I am originally from Mandan and my wife is from Dickinson so we are excited to come back to ND after 30 years away from our families.



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I will be looking at starting chapters east of the Missouri River, so if you or friends and family are interested in what a chapter does, please feel free to contact me at 406-850-8785 or marshall@muledeer.org to answer your questions or to set up an informational meeting in your area. The Mule Deer Foundation has the mission, but it is the volunteers that make things happen! Help us help the mule deer of North Dakota.

