

## **President's Report**

Welcome everyone. My hope is that you and your family are well, safe, and looking forward to a new year with 2026. Chris and I are, and very optimistic as well. A little patience is always in order, and with little bit of time, improvements will reveal themselves. Now-a-days patience is not an attribute that most humans have. Because of what we know and do as fur hunters and trappers, having the patience of a set trap serves to go a long way. That's nothing new in our line of work.

My hope is that you had the opportunity to get out and harvest some fur this past fall and early winter. If not, there's still time. Weather conditions such as these do not happen often, so it is nice to be chasing fur in relative comfort. Returns for your pelts have seen better days, but you never really know what the market may want at any given time. Skunks in 2025 are the perfect example.

It is good to see the eastern zone bobcat harvest is coming along well. Good job to those who have been successful and keep at it for those who have yet to connect. River otters are a sore subject, 10 trap nights and the season was closed. The river otter quota is imagination and not connected to reality of the landscape. And yes, an agenda item for our spring furbearer workgroup meeting again.

What we do is a lifestyle, it ain't a living. I've used those words countless times in the past when describing why we do what we do to those asking. And yes, I do know Blake Shelton recently grabbed that phrase and used it in his recent hit "Stay Country or Die Tryin'". That's okay because our commitments are the same, whether it's trapping, fur hunting, or like Blake, staying country.

No need to say much more as the Dakota Skinner contains the information to keep you informed. Make sure to make frequent visits to the website ([www.ndfhta.com](http://www.ndfhta.com)) as Max Lorge keeps you informed between newsletters. I'll close with a reminder to keep your membership current, so you don't miss any of the association's activities and information. Please consider volunteering for any of the leadership positions or helping with an activity. Until next time, God bless You and God Bless America!

Respectfully, Rick Tischaefner

We are proud affiliates of the National Rifle Association; Sportsmen's Alliance; and the National Trappers Association.

## **2026 Summer Rendezvous**

The summer rendezvous is a family and friends' event and will be held on Saturday June 20, 2026, at the Velva Wildlife Club. Velva Wildlife Club sits on 52 acres of Mouse River bottomland three miles west of Velva on Hwy. 52. The club is a multi-activity location that includes an education facility, rifle range, 3 house trap shooting range, 3 bag target archery range, 23 target 3D archery range, and a new catch and release pond stocked with northern pike. The archery ranges and fishing pond will be open during our rendezvous. The river bottomland provides a variety of habitats which make it a great place for education classes and demonstrations. Primitive camping exists on the grounds, and Cedar Lodge (701-338-3080) in Velva has both motel rooms and hook-ups for campers. Velva also has a city park which has camping.

Demonstrations – if you have something you'd like to see, do, or help with, please let me know. **We need suggestions!** It's hard to put together a schedule when you're not sure what folks want to see. We've tried to provide what's current with the fur market and with the feedback, we've done very well. The folks doing the demonstrations were outstanding and appreciated by those who were on the receiving end. Have an idea? Share it!

Auction Items – we are always in need of new, slightly used, and used items for our auction. Past auctions have been a blend of stand-up comedy and opportunities for a deal or two. Auctioneer Phil does an amazing job for everyone. In all honesty, it is an important event that benefits the association and the education program. Items that have already been donated include traps, trapping equipment, and pelt drying frames. There is always a need for more, so please donate and attend this enjoyable event!

Vendors – are welcome and vendor space is free. It doesn't always have to be about trapping – folks have many interests, and you never know what that may be until you set up as a vendor. Let me know if you'll need space or have any questions or special needs.

### **Annual Meeting**

Our annual meeting will be held during our summer rendezvous on Saturday, June 20, 2026. The meeting will begin at 12:30 PM. The location is the Velva Wildlife Club, Velva, North Dakota.

### **Election Cycle**

The positions of President (Rick Tischaefer), Treasurer (Phil Mastrangelo) and Directors for Districts 2 (Bob Lee) and 4 (Steve Reimer) are up for election in 2026. Names for any nominations or volunteers for these positions should be brought to my attention by May 1, 2026. Please consider helping.

### **2026 North Dakota Game & Fish Department Special Allocation Big Game Drawing**

The North Dakota Century Code provides a special allocation big game license lottery for qualified non-profit organizations which are federal tax exempt under IRS Code 501(c). North Dakota Game & Fish Department manages the application process and conducts the lottery drawing. Successful applicants may be awarded a license to be used as a fundraiser, with a portion of the proceeds used for a conservation or education project. We apply every year for this opportunity but have yet to be selected. We submitted our 2026 application in early December and are awaiting the drawing results, which should be in mid-January.

The number of eligible organizations applying for the sixteen big game special allocation tags continues to increase every year. One hundred and forty-six organizations applied in the 2025 drawing. House Bill 1094 was signed by the Governor last spring and went into effect on August 1, 2025. The change makes eligibility to any IRS Code 501(c) organization or entity, so there will be a significant increase in future applications for any one of those sixteen tags.

### **Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) Video Production**

AFWA, USDA-Wildlife Services, and our education program worked together to produce a wildlife damage management training video titled "The Safe Use of Body-gripping Traps in Urban Areas". The target audience is Wildlife Services Specialists who may have to use body-grip traps in urban and suburban areas to resolve human and wildlife conflicts. We were fortunate to be involved in this important project. Others involved were Bryant White (AFWA and from Phoenix, AZ) as Executive Producer, and Michael Parente (Randy Newberg - On Your Own Adventures and from Bozeman, MT) as Videographer and Editor. We created the script throughout the summer; Bryant and Michael came to Minot, North Dakota in September; and for two days we did the video and sound work in and around Minot. We used the North Dakota Game & Fish Department Conservation Park on the State Fair grounds and properties in Minot owned by John Coughlin of Puppy Dog Properties LLC. The

working draft video has been moved through all the reviewing authorities and Michael is currently updating the video. I suspect it will be a product that is available on YouTube at some point, and we'll include it on our website and YouTube channel. Stay tuned.

## Legislation

We are paying attention to two pieces of federal legislation currently working their way through Congress. House of Representatives (HR) Bill 845 delists the gray wolf from the Endangered Species Act and addresses management after delisting. The House of Representatives voted in favor of the legislation prior to leaving for Christmas break, so HR 845 is now with the Senate.

The second piece of legislation is House of Representatives (HR) Bill 1897, which improves the Endangered Species Act. HR 1897 was still with committee when the House of Representatives took their Christmas break.

We'll continue to follow both and work with our Congressional delegates for favorable outcomes.

## Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies 2025 Resolution

The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) represents North America's fish and wildlife agencies to advance sound, science-based management and conservation of fish and wildlife and their habitats in the public interest.

AFWA passed a resolution at their annual meeting in September 2025 which positively impacts on all that we hold near and dear to our hearts. The title of the resolution is "Supporting Regulated Predator Hunting, Trapping, and Responsible Predation Management". This resolution was submitted by the Sustainable Use of Wildlife Committee (I am an associate member of AFWA and a member of this committee). Read through it and you can see the connections this has with many subjects making the news lately.

**WHEREAS** balancing ecosystems is crucial for biodiversity and wildlife health; and

**WHEREAS** native predators are important components of balanced ecosystems and are managed based on the best available science to achieve desired objectives for all species, ensure sustainable prey and predator populations, and fulfill agency public trust obligations; and

**WHEREAS** predation is a natural component of balanced ecosystems, but can become temporally or spatially imbalanced and threaten the viability and sustainability of prey populations, and in some cases may necessitate local predation management guided by scientific principles and a public process; and

**WHEREAS** responsible place- and time-specific predation management, guided by scientific principles and a public process, is a vital component of wildlife conservation and management; and

**WHEREAS** efforts to mitigate predation may include habitat modification or the relocation or removal of predators; and

**WHEREAS**, managing predation can protect threatened and endangered species, as well as other native species, during sensitive times such as nesting and birthing seasons or when native prey populations are overexposed to predation risks due to other factors such as habitat degradation and weather-induced population vulnerability (e.g., severe winters, extreme drought); and

**WHEREAS** regulated predation management practices include hunting, trapping, and the permitted or authorized removal of predators by professionals to address management objectives for prey species under temporally or geographically limited conditions; and

**WHEREAS** state fish and wildlife agencies exercise primary authority for management of species within their borders across all types of land, including those lands owned by the federal government.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies ("Association") reaffirms its commitment to the responsible use and understanding of predation management techniques guided by scientific principles; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Association recognizes the importance of regulated predator hunting and trapping as legitimate and important components of science-based wildlife management under the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Association will continue to prioritize the conservation of wildlife to ensure the sustainability of prey and predator populations, and safeguard biodiversity and the health of ecosystems; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Association encourages U.S. federal agencies to recognize the importance of managing predation and State authority to use these tools, including on federal public lands under appropriate conditions; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that the Association's President, by written communication to the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other appropriate Federal officials, shall urge all federal land management agencies to take measures to ensure that the jurisdictional authority of the States regarding predation management, as primary managers of wildlife within their borders, is recognized in all applicable federal policies and regulations.