



MINNESOTA OUT OF DOORS

Volume 6, Number 1

Spring 2017

A message from President Joe Hoffmann

The MCF has been busy since the last time I reported. The MCF has been actively partaking in the MN DNR deer management committee as a stakeholder. The MCF executive board members Lance Ness, Gary Botzek and I all attended the 2017 DNR Roundtable talks in January in Bloomington. Gary has been busy representing the MCF at the legislature and he is currently the main DNR Deer planning committee representative for the MCF. Elsa Litecky the CLC coordinator just finished up with the resolution writing session for the Conservation Leadership Corp, which took place February 3- 5th. Meanwhile I have been trying to help our affiliate organizations as their event seasons get underway.

Since January 30th the deer management committee and the Minnesota DNR have been actively engaging the public through a series of public meetings across the state of Minnesota. The hope is that these discussions will help generate the core values and framework for the State's first deer management plan. The deer plan committee members have identified deer plan topic areas, suggested goals and set subtopics within the goal areas. MCF represents so many sportsmen groups in Minnesota, we have been asked to chair the committee. At these meetings, the public has been asked, to give feedback and suggestions on how they feel the department of natural resources should manage our whitetail herds. If interested in the subject, I would fully encourage you to look online at the deer plan (<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/mammals/deer/management/planning/index.html>). Jim Leach director of the Fish and Wildlife Division agency spoke at our last quarterly meeting on deer management and proposed license fee increases.

The Conservation Leadership Corp is doing well. The student resolutions were just presented at the quarterly meeting on March 11th. Students choose to cover three topics areas dealing with pollinators, solar energy and forestry. The students presented their resolutions and the affiliates and board members in attendance voted on which resolutions that the MCF should support in the year to come. All of the student resolutions were accepted and very well done. The board will help push these resolutions forward. We also have three of the students that have shown interest in taking on a larger part of the MNCLC and MCF. Amanda Babcock has accept-

ed the new MNCLC coordinator position while Ellen Hillborn and Kevin Beltz have become MNCLC co-president representing the students as an acting board member of the MCF. I would like to thank them and all of the other students that took part in the first year of the MNCLC. I would also like to say we are accepting applications for the second year so get those applications in. MNCLC applications can be found online on the MCF webpage.

The quarterly meeting had a great turnout. I would like to thank all the clubs that showed up as well as our guest speaker Jim Leach. We had many new faces, which is always nice to see. Students presented their resolutions and MNCLC program sponsors handed out the two hundred and fifty dollar scholarships to the students that could attend the meeting.

The last thing I would like to mention are a few events we have coming up. The Prior Lake VFW Banquet on April 1 and the New Market Ridges Banquet in Jordan on April 8. Please come on out and support your local clubs and the MCF. July 22nd Nicollet Pheasants Forever Chapter and the handful of other organizations including the MCF are holding **Minnesota Outdoor Youth Day** at the Nicollet Conservation Club. The event is July 22 and will have multiple stations for young people under 17 years of age. The event in the past included shooting of bb guns, shotguns, sling shots, bows, tomahawk throws, building bird / bat houses, kayaking and canoeing, minnow races, Tip wall of shame, and this year I believe the MN zoo is coming in with manual education stuff. Every child at the event gets a prize of some sort at the end of the day and a lunch. The event in the past has cost ten dollars per participants but this year event planners are looking to make the event ten dollars per family. The next quarterly meeting is June 10 at the Apple Valley American Legion thanks and I hope to see all there.



Executive Director News

Ex. Director Report

By Gary Botzek
Executive Director



The 2017 legislative session began on January 2, will break for an Easter and Passover week, and adjourn by May 22.

2017 Legislative Concerns & Interest:

The 2017 legislative session started off early with several anti-DNR, less public land purchases, anti-rulemaking, and less regulations on pipeline siting, and energy facility siting bills. They include:

Buffers: First out was the repeal the new buffer law that the Governor and others have worked hard on over the past two years. HF167 (Green) would outright repeal the law and the effort to buffer lakes, rivers, streams, and public water ditches. The governor gave away the private ditch coverage of the new law in 2015. The 16 and ½ foot ditch buffer law had been on the books since the 1920's but not enforced equally across the state. Many farmers are doing a great job of "buffering" waterways from plowed ground. However, MPCA studies continue to show that agricultural runoff is the largest contributor of nitrogen in rivers and lakes.

HF1994 (Torkelson) and SF1693 (Weber) are the main bills of interest and concern. The bills would analyze the DNR's public waters inventory and divide it into two sections; one which would include water that has a shoreland designation and would require a 50-foot buffer. The other section would include waters that do not have a shoreland designation (mostly ditches) which would start with a 16.5-foot basis for a buffer. The bill would also provide \$10 million per year to pay counties, watershed districts, and BWSR to administer and enforce the buffer law. The bills prohibit the enforcement of buffer requirements unless state and federal funding is available to pay 100% of buffer costs and the landowner has declined to accept it.

The bills also extend the deadline for 50-foot buffers to November 1, 2018 and deletes the APO authority for counties and watershed districts for enforcement. The only enforcement of the buffer law would have to be done by BWSR and not the local government.

MCF continues to support current buffer laws on the books. We also support funding to local government and the BWSR to implement and enforce the laws in counties that have not shown good wise stewardship in their protection of clean waters.

Wetlands: The Wetlands Conservation Act has been on the books since 1991. The goal is "no net loss of wetlands" in the state. In 1996 the legislature, based on concerns expressed by local road authorities, established the Local Road Wetland Replacement Program, and allowed the BWSR to establish Wetland Bank Service Areas that cover the entire state. These "banks" allow regions to buy, sell, and trade wetland conservation credits for local road improvements. Historically these banks have been provided money through bonding dollars. However, without a bonding bill in 2016, four of the ten banks are bankrupt! The Governor provided \$5.1 million in general funds to reopen the doors of these banks and another \$10 million in bonding dollars to provide two years of wetland bank funding.

HF434 (Fabian) and SF316 (Ingebrigtsen) passed both bodies and has been signed in to law by the Governor (Chapter 7). The new law provides \$5 million in general funds to BWSR for the purchase of wetland credits to get credits back in all ten of the With the first half of the 2017 legislative session almost in the books, it is time to report on the "progress" to date! The November 2016 election continues to bring new and interesting approaches to government and governance. At the federal level, President Trump continues to surprise the media and even the public. His new cabinet is almost totally in place. He is working with the Republican controlled House

and Senate on budget bills and confirmation of his cabinet members and Supreme Court selection.

Outdoor Heritage Bill for 2017: HF 710 (Uglen) and SF262 (Ingebrigtsen) would appropriate \$104 million in Lessard-Sams dollars for the outdoor heritage portion of the bill. There are 33 habitat projects funded in the bill! The Clean Water Legacy two-year appropriation is estimated to be over \$200 million and the third leg of the stool—for parks, trails, culture, history—is expected to be around \$100 million.

PILT Payments: HF586 (Drazkowski) and SF1005 (Eichorn) would change the outdoor heritage project selection process to require the "set aside" of funds to cover the cost of PILT payments (property taxes) to the counties and townships when land is acquired for public use with Lessard-Sams funds. Currently, all PILT payments are paid from the state general fund. The house bill has passed several committees and is the Tax Committee. It could be added to the omnibus House tax bill. HF143 (Green) calls for no net gain in public lands. Green also has a bill (HF698) that calls for constitutional amendment to replace the current distribution of Lessard-Sams dollars to fund transportation projects.

Elimination of the EQB and limits of DNR/MPCA Rulemaking: HF1291 (Fabian) and SF1087 (Ingebrigtsen) would do away with the Environmental Quality Board and allow industry to conduct and pay for its own environmental review to expedite environmental review. This is a state chamber sponsored bill.

Clean Water/Impaired Water List: HF766 (Swedzinski) and SF672 (Ruud) would make MPCA decisions on impaired water listing more open to public input, comment, and notice. The state impaired waters (lakes, rivers, and stream) list continues to grow with very few waters ever being cleaned up and removed from the impaired list.

Ditch Mowing and Haying: HF124 (Swedzinski) and SF218 (Dahms) would make changes in the current state law relating to mowing and haying of grass in state highway rights of way. This bill would allow local and permitted mowing and haying of grass any time of the year and prohibit MnDOT from requiring state

More news....

Executive Director Report continued....

and prohibit MnDOT from requiring state permits. The result will be loss of habitat for game birds, song birds, and pollinators. However, the farmers want the hay. Scopes on Muzzleloaders: SF289 (Ingebrigtsen) and HF150 (Nash) are moving. This bill would allow the use of a scope on muzzleloaders to take deer.

Siting Selection of a State Shooting Range Facility: SF921 (Ruud) and HF1170 (Swedzinski) This legislation is moving that would money for the DNR shooting Range Improvement Grant Program to set up a a third-party selection process to determine a site or sites for an Olympic type shooting range facility that could be used for the state high school tournament, training facilities for law enforcement, regional, state, and international shooting tournaments. This world-class shooting facility could be structured like the state owned and operated Blaine soccer complex, be owned and operated by a private company, or a combination of both. Once we find a site or sites we can go back to the legislature and ask for bonding dollars to buy land or work with a private party that may be interested in building and/or running a world class shooting range facility. Jim Sable and Gary Botzek testified for the legislation at a Senate committee hearing.

St. Louis River AOC Clean Water Campaign: This legislation and funding would provide a perfect match of Minnesota and federal funds to clean up the St. Louis River. MPCA has requested \$25.4 million in bonding dollars and would be matched up with \$47.2 million in Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funds to cleanup polluted riverbed sediment and industrial waste from the St. Louis River estuary.

CREP Bonding: The MCF is working in a leadership role in asking the state legislature for \$45 million in bonding dollars to match up with 3:1 federal dollars for up to 60,000 acres of new CREP lands. CREP dollars have been added to the LCCMR bill HF1265 (Heintzeman) and SF550 (Westrom).

Lead Shot Ban: A bill that would ban the DNR was doing any rules regarding limiting the use of lead shot on public lands. HF256 (Swedzinski) and SF263

(Eichorn) are the bills to watch.

DNR Hunting & Fishing License Fee Increase Proposal: The MCF has also taken a stakeholder leadership role for the proposed DNR Game and Fish License Fee increases as proposed by the Governor in his budget. The current projection has the Game and Fish Fund dipping into the red sometime in 2019. Other license fee accounts, like AIS, go red in 2018. The license fee increases include game and fish, AIS, all-terrain vehicles, cross country ski, snowmobile, and water recreation. As you already know we have 600,000 hunters and 1.5 million anglers currently purchasing licenses. The demographics and trends for license purchases do not look good into the future. MCF and MN Trout Unlimited and others have developed a letter of support for license fee increases for the proposed deer license increase and the fishing license increase. We are also asking the legislature to contribute general funds for game and fish functions. The natural resources of our state are of value to all Minnesota citizens and should not be paid for only by anglers and hunters. We are working closely with the DNR on this very tough sell at the state capitol.

DNR Deer Management Plan Advisory Committee: The MCF is serving on the twenty member Minnesota Deer Management Plan Advisory Committee. The charge to the committee by the Legislative Auditor and the State Legislature is to pull together all the deer management strategies and practices and if possible come up with statewide recommendations for deer management. With the outbreak of CWD (chronic wasting disease) this fall in southeastern Minnesota, the job got a bit more timely and difficult. MCF member, the Bluffland Whitetails Association, also serves on the committee. The first meeting was held on December 13 at DNR/St. Paul. The second meeting was held on January 18 in Sauk Rapids. Jerome Kahl, president of the Rice Sportsmen's Club served as my alternate at that meeting. After DNR public hearings through February the next/third meeting of the Advisory Committee is set for March 28 in Sauk Rapids.

MCF Conservation Leadership Corp: The new MCF Conservation Leadership Corp held its first graduation on March

11. Our first class are the young conservation leaders of the future! At our quarterly meeting in Inver Grove Heights four students received their \$250 scholarship checks and presented resolutions on solar energy incentives for the public and local businesses, private forest landowner incentives, and better protection of pollinators. MCF board member Elsa Litecky organized and coordinated the first year of this new program for the MCF. It is modeled after the Wisconsin program. One or more of the resolutions may be referred to the NWF for their resolution review process, ending up at the national convention in Washington State in June.

Membership Recruitment Efforts: The MCF represents around 40 sportsmen clubs around the state. We also represent individuals, families, and lifetime members. We are running ads in the Outdoor News to drive readers to our website to see what we are all about—from advocacy on outdoor issues, to education (Walk on the Wildside magazine for 5-6 graders), to our new youth conservation leadership efforts. This is what the MCF is all about. We believe that if folks go to our website and check us out they will strongly consider individual membership (\$25-\$100 range) and join our efforts. It is a tax-deductible contribution and is a wise smart investment! Tell your friends and family to join us!

If you have any questions or comments about the legislative session, youth conservation, or membership recruitment please contact me directly at gary@capitolconnections.com or call 651-293-9295. Go Spring!

MCF Annual Meeting

Sept. 9 & 10

ST. JAMES HOTEL
Red Wing, MN

More info in the next MOOD

Save the dates! Hope to see you there!

**MINNESOTA CONSERVATION
FEDERATION**

542 Snelling Ave. S. #104
St. Paul, MN 55116

Phone: 651-690-3077
Email: info@mncf.org

***Minnesota Conservation Federation
2016-17 Officers***

Joe Hoffmann, President
Lance Ness, 1st Vice President
Don Nickolay, 2nd Vice President
vacant, Treasurer
Steve Maurice, Secretary

**ANY ITEMS FOR PUBLICATION MAY BE E-MAILED
OR SENT TO THE MINNESOTA CONSERVATION
FEDERATION — info@mncf.org**

Quarterly Meeting

Saturday, June 10th
9:30 am

Apple Valley American Legion
14521 Granada Dr.
Apple Valley, MN 55124
952-431-1776

We hope to see you there!



Submit your club's news to *Minnesota Out of Doors* Newsletter

The Minnesota Conservation Federation's *Minnesota Out of Doors* newsletter is a place for member clubs to present news about their accomplishments. Club news and/or photos can be submitted to: Tammy Abrahamson, Minnesota Conservation Federation, 542 Snelling Avenue South #104, St. Paul, MN 55116, or by e-mail to info@mncf.org. All submissions should be directed to Tammy. The deadline for submissions for the next newsletter is June 17, 2016.