

North Dakota Governor Creating Hunting Opportunities

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Two laws recently signed by North Dakota Governor John Hoeven will create new opportunities and access for the state's youth hunters and generate revenue for the National Wild Turkey Federation's habitat and outreach programs.

Roger Collins, former NWTF North Dakota state chapter president, played a major role throughout the legislative process helping draft the language, obtaining bill sponsors and testifying in support of both bills.

"The reason for all of the effort was simply to provide the same hunting opportunities for spring turkey hunters that already exist for other game species in North Dakota," Collins said.

Senate Bill 2250, which passed unanimously, creates a one-time special youth spring wild turkey hunting license. The license is available to youth age 15 and younger who have never received a spring wild turkey hunting license before and requires an adult to accompany the youth hunter afield.

"This license promotes NWTF's mission to preserve our nation's hunting heritage," said Collins.

"Creating opportunities for the state's youth to learn how to hunt wild turkeys at an earlier age is a win-win situation for everyone."

Senate Bill 2251, which passed the Senate 45-1 and the House 90-1, creates a special spring turkey hunting license to be auctioned or raffled by the NWTF, with no less than 90 percent of the proceeds to be deposited in the NWTF's North Dakota Hunting Heritage Super Fund. The remaining money can be used to promote the raffle or auction.

The auction tag gives nonresidents the first opportunity to bid on a state-issued spring turkey tag. The winner will be allowed to hunt on private or public properties in the Peace Garden State. Otherwise, state-issued spring turkey hunting

permits are available only to North Dakota residents. Nonresidents may purchase spring wild turkey permits on North Dakota Indian reservations.

The NWTF will use the money raised through the tag to improve wildlife habitat throughout the state and promote the state's hunting tradition through outreach programs.

One of the programs the money could benefit is Operation Big Sky, the NWTF's regional wildlife habitat program designed to improve wild turkey populations in the northern Great Plains.

Through the Big Sky winter habitat program, NWTF chapters fund projects to plant fruit-producing shrubs, leave standing grain for wildlife after crop harvests and assist ranchers that winter large numbers of turkeys on their property while allowing them to continue feeding livestock.

"Dependable, long-term food supplies for wild turkeys created by habitat improvements means healthy turkey populations in this harsh climate," said Jared McJunkin, NWTF's North Dakota regional biologist. "This program combines the dedication of the NWTF's volunteers with the support of great corporate partners, which has benefited both wildlife and landowners."

The NWTF's outreach programs, JAKES (Juniors Acquiring Knowledge Ethics and Sportsmanship), Wheelin' Sportsmen, the program for outdoorsmen and women with disabilities, and Women in the Outdoors will also benefit from dollars generated through the tag auction.