

BUDGET SECTION PRESENTATION

September 23, 2015

Thank you for having me here today to provide a summary of funding provided to other entities, and the purpose of that funding. The mission statement of the Game and Fish Department is to protect, enhance, and conserve fish and wildlife populations and their habitat for sustained public consumptive and nonconsumptive use. We really can't accomplish that mission by ourselves.

It takes partners, and partnerships are an important overall part of helping in what Game and Fish provides. We consistently partner with other state agencies to accomplish goals that meet the mission of each agency and benefit the public of North Dakota. We have also had successful partnerships with many other governmental and nongovernmental organizations over the years.

One of the primary reasons I'm here today is because of some of those partnerships with some nongovernmental entities (NGO).

Background

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department (Department) entered into a cooperative agreement with Pheasants Forever, Inc. beginning in 2008, and with Ducks Unlimited in 2009 to assist in delivering Farm Bill conservation program to landowners across the state. These particular agreements are partnerships between the Department, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), North Dakota Natural Resources Trust (NRT), local North Dakota Pheasants Forever chapters and Pheasants Forever, Inc. (PF); or with Ducks Unlimited, NRCS, and NRT depending on the agreement. At the time those first cooperative agreements were signed, there were five farm bill biologist positions with Pheasants Forever and three with Ducks Unlimited.

These two NGOs hired Farm Bill Biologists (FBBs) to assist with promotion, delivery and implementation of voluntary USDA Farm Bill conservation programs, as allowed and directed by the federal Farm Bill. These positions have worked under the direct supervision of NRCS supervisors and assisted NRCS with voluntary conservation programs such as Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and others.

These positions were created because the NRCS was consistently understaffed, and there was a demand from landowners for these types of programs that was not being met.

The partners included in the cooperative agreement coordinated with NRCS to explain the programs available and develop a Work Plan for the FBBs. The Work Plan details the work product, an explanation/definition of the work product, work units, along with the estimated work units to be completed which generates an estimated cost. The FBB's coded their time to the appropriate work unit. Training is provided by NRCS. As work products are completed, monthly reports were generated for the partners. Included with the reports were an invoice for the work completed. This is a standard procedure, where a service is rendered, a report/invoice is provided and payment is issued. Only those services provided were paid for. The FBBs then provide information to landowners explaining the complex programs available through the Farm Bill and it's something the landowner wants, they wrote the work plan for the appropriate program and helped the landowner implement the practice.

Concerns

Concerns began to arise from the agricultural community regarding the location of the biologists in local NRCS offices, and the potential for those biologists influencing other issues related to the Farm Bill. Real or perceived, the issue rose to a national level. As a result, discussion began with Congressman Cramer's office on how to continue with the delivery of the voluntary conservation programs desired by landowners, yet still address the issue brought forward by agricultural groups.

Resolution

In early August a diverse group of conservation and agricultural interests met and determined the best course of action was to pool resources and collaborate to meet the desires of North Dakota landowners. It entailed a slightly different model that would have the farm bill biologists under the North Dakota Association of Soil Conservation Districts (NDASCD). The partnership mechanism would remain the same, i.e., the NRCS would match the funding generated by this alliance of groups on a one to one basis with the same criteria as was present under the previous agreement, which was to pay for 'deliverables' only. Four of these farm bill biologist positions are currently being advertised by the NDASCD and will be stationed in Hettinger, Turtle Lake, Napoleon and Jamestown at the current time. As funding permits, future positions and locations may be added.

Three of the current farm bill biologists are being retained under Pheasants Forever on a short term basis. Given that Pheasants Forever had three of these biologists already on staff, there was a concern that they would not move into one of the new positions, so it was agreed to by the group to phase out their cooperative agreements with NRCS over a nine-month period beginning October 1, 2015. As of July 1, 2016 the positions will move into the NDASCD model, and funding for those biologists would be contributed toward the cooperative agreement.

The coalition of agricultural and conservation groups is providing funding toward farm bill biologists (see table at end of narrative) which will be hired through the North Dakota Association of Conservation Districts (NDASCD). In August 2015, the NDASCD signed an agreement with USDA-NRCS to cooperatively fund farm bill biologists, essentially replacing the current Pheasants Forever and Ducks Unlimited cooperative agreements as of October 1, 2015. Agricultural groups agreed that NDASCD would be a neutral, third-party, with which agricultural groups would feel comfortable working with. The agricultural groups agreed on a phase-out of the existing FBB positions under the current PF agreement.

There are numerous other entities to which Game and Fish provides funding, for a variety of purposes. And they all support our mission and help serve North Dakota. These range from education grants for the North Dakota Stockmen's Association; Boy Scouts; education regarding aquatic nuisance species; a number of entities for mentoring young hunters; numerous creel surveys on lakes across the state; grants to the Little Missouri Grazing Association to assist in gathering information on sage grouse habitat; grants to assist in placing fishing facilities on smaller lakes across the state; grants to help local entities with shooting ranges; and funding to help implement millions of dollars of projects provided through federal funding. All of these are meant to help grow or protect fish and wildlife resources and balance interests to the extent possible. And partnerships are the key to helping accomplish all of those goals. I'm convinced we would not accomplish nearly as much as we do without these partnerships.

Partner Organizational Funding Contributions for NDASCD Agreement

Organization	Contribution
North Dakota Farm Bureau	\$10,000
North Dakota Grain Growers Association	\$10,000
North Dakota Barley Council	Included with NDGGA
North Dakota Wheat Growers Association	Included with NDGGA
U.S. Durum Growers Association	Included with NDGGA
Northern Canola Growers Association	\$1,000
North Dakota Corn Growers Association	\$7,500
North Dakota Soybean Growers Association	\$5,000
North Dakota Game and Fish Department	\$100,000
Ducks Unlimited, Inc.	\$20,000
Pheasants Forever, Inc.	\$20,000
Delta Waterfowl	\$5,000
North Dakota Natural Resources Trust	\$40,000
NRCS Chief Match	\$38,500
Total	\$237,000.00

Summary of Grants Provided in 2013-15

Farm Bill Biologists

Pheasants Forever	\$220,489.23
Ducks Unlimited	\$45,813.25

The ND Game and Fish Department participated in a cooperative agreement with Ducks Unlimited and Pheasants Forever to support farm bill biologists across the state to help landowners improve habitat on their property through voluntary conservation programs authorized through the farm bill. The purpose of Farm Bill Biologists is to assist landowners in designing, developing, and funding habitat improvements on private lands. Pheasants Forever and Ducks Unlimited Farm Bill Biologists possess the knowledge of federal, state, and local programs to assist landowners in finding the right program to meet their personal habitat and land use goals. Through a unique partnership, Farm Bill Biologists had been located in local USDA service centers in priority habitat areas throughout the state.

Sponsorships

Stockman's Assn	\$2,148.24	To be Paid in new biennium
Water Ed Foundation	\$2,500	Boy Scouts \$3,908
ND Envirothon	\$5,500	Boy Scouts \$1,000
Boy Scouts	\$1,000	ND FFA <u>\$1,000</u>
Keep ND Clean	<u>\$2,000</u>	\$5,908
	\$13,148.24	

ANS Grants

Friends of Lake Sakakawea	\$161,000
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Agreement to emphasize activities that reduce the risk of further movement of aquatic nuisance species into ND.

Youth Hunter Mentorships (48) \$63,792.99

Surveys/Studies \$452,738.64

Fisheries (paddlefish, Creel surveys, Little Missouri Grazing Association (Sage Grouse), Ducks Unlimited)

Shooting Range Grants (10) \$149,431.49

Implementation Funding

Ducks Unlimited \$647,080

ND Natural Resources Trust \$45,813.25

North American Waterfowl Management Plan with Ducks Unlimited and USDI Fish & Wildlife Services for support of NAWMP Staff for rotational grazing system development, (including well development, fences, solar panels, creations of stock dams, etc.), grassland restoration, wetland creation/restoration, wetland enhancement projects in Drift Prairie and Northern Coteau, and Chase Lake & Valley City Migratory Bird Biologist. This funding has assisted in securing and delivery of over \$8 million in federal funding and \$11.5 million in other funds to private landowners across ND over the timeframe associated with this funding. Funding to support NAWMP conservation efforts in the Missouri Coteau of Saskatchewan, Canada.