THE HUNTING FILM TOUR SET TO CRISS CROSS SOUTH DAKOTA

Fair chase adventure films stoke the fires in advance of upcoming hunting seasons

(Sioux Falls, SD) The South Dakota Wildlife Federation (SDWF) is pleased to announce the 2nd Annual Hunting Film Tour event coming to select theaters across the state during the month of October. The Hunting Film Tour (HFT) is a traveling film festival that allows outdoor enthusiasts of all ages to enjoy exciting, fair chase, story driven content from hunting adventures around the globe; all of which will be shown on the big screen in crisp high definition.

Unlike the mere 30 minute TV segments that have long dominated outdoor media, The HFT provides a home for unique films and filmmakers that capture the stories, landscapes and pursuits that make hunting a generational passion. From big game archery and rifle hunts, to exotic international quests, to wing shooting and waterfowl; the 2016 tour features films each highlighting a different adventure.

Groups like the South Dakota Wildlife Federation have leveraged the HFT platform and utilize this event as a core fund raising tool to further their mission in protecting fish and game, lands and waters, public access and the ability to enjoy our hunting and fishing heritage for this and future generations. The SDWF is the oldest wildlife conservation policy advocacy organization in South Dakota with membership of over 3,330 sportsmen and women in 16 affiliate clubs across the state. The South Dakota Wildlife Federation is committed to protecting the wildlife management and outdoor recreation interests of South Dakota for future generations.

“Last year, we hosted successful Hunting Film Tour events in Sioux Falls, Pierre and Rapid City,” said Mark Widman, Vice President of the South Dakota Wildlife Federation. “People came out to enjoy a very unique event. We wanted to offer something different from your standard fundraising banquet and we found it with the Hunting Film Tour. We had families in attendance and everyone had a great time watching some incredible high quality, fair chase hunting adventures on the big screen. The Saturday morning hunting shows don’t even come close to this experience. These films take you to places every hunter dreams of going. You really do get lost in the film, because of the atmosphere and best of all, there are no commercial interruptions.”

2016 Hunting Film Tour events will be held in:

* Sioux Falls, SD – Thursday, October 6th at the Orpheum Theater
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* Mitchell, SD – Thursday, October 20th at the Logan Theater

“Our vision is becoming a reality and it is proving to be a very exciting and rewarding experience building the Tour” said Gary Gillett, owner of the Hunting Film Tour. “From all perspectives, there is a tidal wave coming; the quality of content continues to be amped up as film makers enhance their skills and equipment arsenal, industry corporate support continues to increase as well. We have aligned with all key conservation organizations and fan base awareness is rapidly growing. It is a very exciting revolution taking place in the outdoor media space!”

For a full tour schedule, film trailers and to purchase tickets go to: www.huntingfilmtour.com

GF&P Adopts New Land Acquisition Policy

The new land acquisition policy approved last month, by the South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks Commission will apply to the Parks and Recreation Division as well as the Wildlife Division, and will call for earlier word to be given to the commission about possible purchases.

An example of that change in approach was on display at the commission’s meeting this week. In addition to one pending purchase that eventually would need the commission’s approval, there are 10 potential acquisitions in the works.

While it’s not explicitly in the policy, there will be more emphasis on places for people to enjoy shooting sports, from archery to high-powered rifles, according to Tony Leif, director for the Wildlife Division.

“But it also would be a step toward recruitment of additional hunters in the future,” Leif said.

One practice in recent years has been courtesy notification of county commissions 30 days before purchases in their jurisdictions, according to Paul Coughlin, who oversees acquisitions for the Wildlife Division.

County commission approval is not necessary for GF&P to proceed with a purchase, however.

Coughlin said the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is required to ask a county commission for its position on a proposed purchase.

The federal agency ultimately needs the governor’s approval and can disregard a county commission position if the governor supports the acquisition, according to Coughlin. That has happened in the past.

GF&P makes its acquisitions under blanket authority granted by the Legislature. The Game, Fish & Parks Commission adopted the priorities on a voice vote without opposition.

The pending acquisition is a 175-acre tract known as the Kirschman addition to the Ulmer game production area northeast of Lesterville in Yankton County. The expected closing for the purchase is November.

Other possible acquisitions now in the works include:

• Five acres to be added to the Spring Creek game production area in Pennington County.

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Affiliated with the National Wildlife Federation VOLUME 56, NUMBER 5

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Farmers- need a tax deduction this year? Consider donating some grain or land to the SDWF.

You will get a tax break and your support of the SDWF will help protect the land and wildlife you love.
During the Convention, we will be drawing the winners for the 2016 Pheasant Hunt and the 2015-2016 Buffalo Shoot. Good luck and a big THANK YOU to all of you that purchased chances on both of these exciting hunts.

Yesterday morning I drove by some public hunting lands that are near my home here on Lake Oahe in the Spring / Cow creek areas. I saw several different broods of pheasant chicks on the road eating gravel. It looks like the pheasant hatch is very good in this area. The first week of August I believe GF&P starts their brood counting routes. At this time next month, we should be close to having the actual count and population estimates statewide. I predict parts of SD is in for a very good fall pheasant season, but the future is still in question due to changing farming practices and the lack of better conservation programs and the lack of the acceptance of CRP sign-ups by the NRCS and FSA here in SD.

By the time you read this article, the first hunting season in South Dakota will be under way. The Mourning Dove season begins the first of September. It is an exciting and very busy time for those of us who love to hunt and enjoy the outdoors here in SD.

Be sure to read the fantastic brood survey results that GF&P has released (front page article). It looks like the majority of the traditional pheasant hot spots will up from last year. With the many grasshoppers that are around right now, the young pheasants should have plenty of protein to grow on. I have a tough time thinking that we will continue with these high numbers in a few years, with our loss of CRP acres here in SD.

Mark your calendars for the dates of September 9-11, 2016 for the SDWF 71st Annual Convention to be held in Milbank, SD. Whetstone Sportsmen will be hosts. See the schedule print-out in this Out-of-Doors for times and planned activities. We will be honoring two Conservation leaders from South Dakota for times and planned activities. We will be honoring two Conservation leaders from South Dakota on August 26th for their dedication to conservation. We will be honoring two Conservation leaders from South Dakota on August 26th for their dedication to conservation. We will be honoring two Conservation leaders from South Dakota on August 26th for their dedication to conservation. We will be honoring two Conservation leaders from South Dakota on August 26th for their dedication to conservation. We will be honoring two Conservation leaders from South Dakota on August 26th for their dedication to conservation.
As we close in on our 2016 annual SDWF state convention, I am reminded just how fast time flies. It was four years ago that I accepted the Presidency of SDWF, not really knowing what I was doing or what I should expect. I’ve been told this is the longest that any SDWF President has served, and I can kind of see why. It does take time away from work and family, and it can be stressful, especially during legislative sessions where, if we don’t succeed in protecting what SDWF has fought for since 1947, it can reflect badly on our organization.

Luckily, we have succeeded in almost every aspect of maintaining our outdoors traditions and heritage for our future generations. But it hasn’t been easy, and we still have big challenges ahead. I appreciate the support of the SDWF Board and Affiliates to make sure we are a viable and powerful force in South Dakota. I want to especially thank the Brookings Wildlife Federation and members who have once again stepped up to achieve “Big Dog” status. If you recall, we have the Legacy members for those who donate $100 and up, and I started the “Big Dogs” for any member, affiliate, or business that would give $5,000 or more to the new CAMO Coalition. I knew we’d be involved in future lawsuits and fighting big money on the other side, and that has come true. SDWF needs your help as we’ve got people trying to close our public waters and the roads to access our public lands and water.

I’ve been disappointed that the ask “JUST ONE” campaign hasn’t really worked to my expectations. We’ve only added a few hundred members instead of a few thousand. But we can’t stop asking! I was told that people don’t like to ask their hunting and fishing buddies to join, or their friends just say they will let SDWF handle it. It’s not right or fair that 3,500 SDWF members shoulder the total burden of every other person who has enjoyed the outdoors in this state. People tend to take things for granted, so we need you to be the voice of SDWF and tell them to step up to the plate and help us preserve what they love!

I mentioned that BWF has become “Big Dogs” again with the help of donations from the spouses of two deceased members. Chuck McMullen was a long-time member of BWF and served on the board at the time of his death. He was instrumental in BWF becoming the first affiliate to attain “Big Dog” status with his personal $1,000 check. Upon his death, $2,100 in memorial money was directed to fund scholarships to send campers to the SDWF Bob Marshall Youth Conservation Camp. Recently, his wife of 48 years donated two beautiful bronzes (deer and antelope) with a value of $3,400 to help SDWF continue our mission.

Charles Peterson was also a long-time member of BWF, as well as a very serious big game hunter and environmentalist. He hunted large game in North America and supported game restoration programs through memberships and direct monetary contributions. Because he shot so many trophies, he and his wife decided to convert an extra garage into his man cave. He had mounts of caribou, elk, mule deer, Big Horn sheep, bison, wolverine, fox, and waterfowl. One of his caribou scored in the top ten at one time. During a recent visit with Carol, his wife of 50 years, I learned that she wanted to donate his $7,000+ extensive ammo and brass collection to SDWF to help ensure Charles’ legacy for future hunters.

The funds from the sales of these gifts will give us a boost for the coming year and are very much appreciated. If you or someone you know wants to leave a legacy to SDWF, please let us know!

We always encourage affiliates to send in stories and photos of the different events they take part in. On August 13th, the BWF helped sponsor the 3rd annual “Women in the Outdoors” event at Beacon Hill Rifle and Pistol Club. There were a record 36 participants of all ages, and it was a blast! We had several different stations, including .22 pistol/rifle, black powder, long rifles, three-gun, pistol shooting, cowboy action, archery, shotgun, and hatchet/knife throwing. Probably the best story was about a young girl who was a little afraid to shoot. With some proper training and a little coaxing, she fired and hit the 20-yard steel target. From then on, you couldn’t get the .22 rifle away from her or take the smile off her face. And that, my friends, is what each volunteer that helped that day lives for! Please send us your stories!

If you can, please come out and help us advertise the SDWF Hunting Film Tour showings in Sioux Falls, Rapid City, Pierre and Mitchell this year! Look forward to seeing everyone at the convention in Milbank!
71st Annual Convention
Sept. 9, 10, 11, 2016 Schedule of Events

Sunday – Sept. 11
The Sunday Morning Session will be held at the Lantern Inn
8:30 AM Registration for newcomers
• 9:00 AM: CALL TO ORDER
• Invocation and Prayer
• Pledge of Allegiance and Conservation Pledge
• Seating of the delegates
• Affiliate reports and updates
• Committee Reports:
  ➢ Youth Conservation Camp (including Endowment Fund update)
  ➢ Any other updates
• David Dittloff, NWF Regional Representative and Outreach Coordinator
• Report from Dave Nauman and Chris Hesla on lobbying efforts/current issues
• Report on Camo Coalition
• Short Break
• Approval of last year’s financial statement
• Further discussion on and adoption of the budget
• Bids for 2017 Annual Convention
• Any further business
• Elections for open positions
• Oath of Office induction for newly elected directors and officers
• Any further resolutions- Bob Jacobson
• 12:00 Noon lunch break if needed, lunch on your own
• 2:00 PM: Adjourn

2:00 PM – SDWF Board of Directors Post-Convention Meeting
(To include new officers.)
• Call to Order
• Consideration of Approval of Absence from meeting for any absent Officer or Director.
• Review and approve any Executive Committee action taken between meetings.
• Any further discussion on budget, PR and development
• Set the fall meeting date, place and time.
• Appointment of delegate and alternate delegate to the NWF Governing Board.
• Appointment of the Legislative Lobbyists
• Appointment of delegate and alternate delegate to the NWF Annual Convention
• Set the fall meeting date, place and time.
• Any further discussion on budget, PR and development
• Any further business.
• Executive Session
• Adjourn

Prices and Fees
Delegate Registration Fee - $15.00
(No delegate registration fee to the general public.)
Friday: No Host Social, and food available in Lantern restaurant Saturday lunch - $15.00 • Saturday night 2 Meat buffet - $30.00

South Dakota Wildlife Federation
71st Annual Convention
Sept. 9-11, 2016

Friday – Sept. 9
Come out to the Lantern Inn
• 6:00 PM ~ No host bar with meals available in Lantern restaurant

Saturday – Sept. 10
• 7:30 AM ~ Registration at the Lantern Inn
• 8:00 AM – SDWF Board of Directors Pre-Convention Meeting
  ➢ Call to Order
  ➢ Consideration of Approval of Absence from meeting for any absent Officer or Director
  ➢ Approval of the Minutes of the Spring Governing Board Meeting
  ➢ Approval of the Treasurer’s Financial Report (see also below)
  ➢ Review and approve any Executive Committee action taken between meetings
  ➢ Review of any delinquent dues from affiliate clubs not received by July 31st and approval of seating of delegates from delinquent affiliates
  ➢ Any further business
  ➢ Adjourn
• 8:30 AM: First Session of the 71st Annual Convention Board of Directors, Affiliate Delegates and the public.
• Call to Order
• Invocation and Prayer
• Pledge of Allegiance
• Seating of the delegates
• Welcome and opening remarks.
• Report from the Executive Director
• Approval of the Treasurer’s Financial Report
• Committee Reports:
  ➢ By-laws
  ➢ Resolutions
  ➢ Budget and Finance
  ➢ PR and Development
• Nominations: Open positions for Sunday’s vote.
• Short Break
• 9 AM For the Ladies; A bus tour of local wildlife area and museum with a lunch
• 10:30 AM – Tony Leif, SD Dept. of Game, Fish and Parks, Sect.
• Quick preview of afternoon programs and other options.
• Noon ~ Lunch will be served $15
• 1:00 PM – SD Sportsmen against Hunger, Director Ron Fowler will address the delegates and Affiliates.
• 1:30 PM – Russ Roberts, to talk about possible future deer management in SD.
• 2:00 PM – SD Attorney General and candidate for the Gov. of SD Marty Jackley is tentatively scheduled to talk.
• 3:00 PM – SD Rep. Mark Mickelson and candidate for Gov. of SD is tentatively scheduled to talk.
• 4:00 PM Biologist in charge of the introduction of Sturgeon into Bigstone
• 6:00 PM – Social, 2-meat Dinner buffet, Conservation Awards & Auction at the Lantern Inn

Call to Order
Approval of the Treasurer’s Financial Report (see Review of any delinquent dues from affiliate clubs Any further business Adjourn
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Our Dangerous Conservation Crisis

By Dan Ashe, director of U.S. Fish & Wildlife

We are at a make-or-break juncture for wildlife conservation. It’s time for leaders to lead.

I’ve presented versions of these thoughts in several venues, including a keynote address at this year’s American Wildlife and Natural Resources Management Conference, and the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership Media Summit. I’m told that the standing ovation from the 1300-plus attendees at the North American was either unprecedented, or, at least, the only one that anyone could remember. People came up throughout and after the conference and said some variety of, “Thank you! That needed to be said.” I’ve received dozens of emails, like this one, from a sportsman and long-tenured leader in the conservation community:

“...just read your referenced remarks out in Colorado [at TRCP Media Summit]. Great insight from a tremendous depth of experience, foresight and vision—bravo and kudos for articulating the message all aspects of the conservation community needs to hear and embrace!”

Honestly, I didn’t and don’t think they’re that revolutionary, but in retrospect, perhaps they’re revealing in the same way that Toto revealed the true nature, vulnerability, and fraudulence of the Wizard of Oz, by simply pulling back a curtain.

The curtain I’ve apparently pulled back has three pieces:

First, and briefly, the nature of the challenge that we face today, and will increasingly face tomorrow.

Second, a growing and disabling dysfunction in the conservation community.

Third, a specific and tragic symptom of that dysfunction—the growing irrelevance of conservation.

So, first things first. And many of you have heard me say this before. Our challenge in conserving wild creatures is human ecology—the world’s dominant, disrupting ecological force.

Today, we share the planet with 7.3 billion other people. By mid-century, we will be approaching 10 billion. And it’s not just our growing numbers, but our expanding affluence. More of the world’s population will be more like us, with increasing access to things like electricity, education, transportation, and health care. We will demand more fuel, more fiber, and more food, and we will consume more of the planet’s ecological space. And though we would wish it were not so, that means less and less for the rest of what we collectively call biodiversity.

So, continued success will require that we become smarter, faster, and stronger. Better focused. More unified. Collectively determined. Unfortunately, we’re headed in the opposite direction.

And that’s a good transition to my second point.

As a community, we have a significant, growing, and disabling dysfunction. We are increasingly viewing ourselves as an island in a rising and rolling sea of social transformation. We are attempting to armor ourselves against its tremendous tides of change. We are reflexive, defensive, and increasingly angry, at the proportion of the population that just doesn’t get it.

The inconvenient truth, however, is that the don’t-get-it-crowd is a lot bigger and growing, while we and our island culture are, again, moving in the opposite direction.

So, easy things have become hard. Hard things are now impossible.

Case-in-point is what we call a Sportsmen’s Bill. And this is not a criticism of the Congressional sponsors, because they are responding to us. We are the problem. This is our dysfunction.

Rome burns ... prairies are in crisis ... Asian carp assault the Great Lakes ... Burmese pythons strangle the Everglades ... Elephants, rhinos, and other wildlife are decimated by a global epidemic of trafficking ... and state and federal refuges in California (anchors of the Pacific Flyway) are starved of water ... mule deer are disappearing from large expanses of state and federal refuges in California (anchors of the Pacific Flyway) ... and on, and on.

And we ask Congress to address the import of 41 polar bear trophies, killed in 2008, in the name of Sportsmen. The Land and Water Conservation Fund expires. But, in the name of Sportsmen, we ask Congress to exempt lead bullets from Toxic Substances Control Act regulation, well knowing that lead bullets are not being regulated by TSCA.

And then, early this year, we witnessed the armed, illegal occupation of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge by extremists who deny the legitimacy of federal and state government, and the entire concept of public lands held in trust for the American people.

I’ll pause here to recognize the national conservation organizations who stood up and spoke out publicly against the occupation at Malheur: the National Wildlife Federation; National Wildlife Refuge Association; Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership; Trout Unlimited; Backcountry Hunters and Anglers; Defenders of Wildlife; Center for Biological Diversity; and the Audubon Society. If your favorite national conservation organization is not listed here, it’s because they chose to do nothing at this crucial moment.

The great parliamentarian Edmund Burke said—The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.

It has never been more important for good men and women, and their great organizations to act to defeat the cancer that is growing in Congress, state legislatures, and county commissions across the nation. Our ability to conserve and protect our public lands and native wildlife is being steadily undercut by politicians hostile to the very idea of public trust.

These ideologues are waging a relentless campaign to undermine the legitimacy of public lands, public resources, and wildlife held in trust for the public. They want the federal government to divest hundreds of millions of acres of public land—not for sportsmen or women—but for economic development, private use, and corporate profit.

They’re doing what we used to do so well. They’re playing the long game and their larger aim is succeeding—undercutting public support and confusing the issue for voters.

The Malheur occupation didn’t occur in a vacuum. It happened because there are people—many of whom occupy positions of power and influence across the West—who share their values and beliefs, even if they recite their methods—for now.

Sadly, the public doesn’t seem to realize the stakes.

Which brings me to my third point. Conservation is increasingly irrelevant in today’s changing American society.

Relevance is the noun form of the adjective relevant, which means important to the matter at hand. To us, and our predecessors—anglers, hunters, and outdoor enthusiasts—conservation has been relevant because it sustains the things we care about. The matters at hand.

But fewer and fewer people are fishing, hunting, and spending time outdoors. More than 8 in 10 Americans live in urban and suburban environments. And urbanization is accelerating. The nation will soon be made up of a majority of minorities.

We—you, me, our organizations, our profession, our community—do not look like America. We do not, therefore, think like America. How then can we even understand, let alone achieve what is important to the matters at hand in a changing America?

I asked the 1300-plus attendees at the North American Conference to count ten people around them. I then asked them to raise a hand if at least four of those people were women. 51% of Americans are women. About 20 hands went up in the room. Ouch!

Then, I asked them to raise a hand if at least four of those people were not Caucasian (i.e., white). Around 40% of Americans are minorities, and more than 50% of children. One hand was raised. Double-Ouch!

This is a crisis for conservation. We simply must address it. We must change and change rapidly. And yes, change comes hard. But, as General Eric Shinseki told us, “If you don’t like change, you’re going to like irrelevance even less. We are seeing the early stages of irrelevance. We need to embrace rapid and revolutionary change.

So, we’re facing big challenges; our conservation family has some disabling dysfunctions; and we’re facing a crisis of relevance. Here’s what we need to do:

We have to break out of the disciplinary silos that we built, and that served us so well, in the 20th century. We can’t do 21st-century conservation if we see the world divided into fish, wildlife, range, and forestry. We have to unite these great disciplines and see conservation in a larger context, and design conservation on a larger scale.

We have to have zero tolerance for politicians, at all levels of government, who support divestiture of public lands. No candidates should be able to call themselves sportsmen or expect the vote of sportsmen...
We need a professional ethic that unites us as a community. Former President Amendment. We need politicians who will stand up for clean air and water, for about rights to hunt and fish, or fear mongering about threats to the Second Read it yourself. Professional public servants manage them for public benefit, not private profit. The real truth is, the people do own these lands and waters. And good, professional, and I'm not going to sit and do nothing. Pointing out facts is not partisan. I've always tried to be a good man, and good political partisan, and my 34-year professional career speaks for itself on that point. But those who know me know that I'm no po was nominated to be U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service director by President Barack This week, we learned that the Republican Party Platform—the party of Teddy land ownership and professional stewardship. Unless they defend, loudly and at every turn, the benefits and importance of public unless they defend, loudly and at every turn, the benefits and importance of public land ownership and professional stewardship.

This week, we learned that the Republican Party Platform—the party of Teddy Roosevelt—has endorsed the disposal of federal public lands. It's no secret that I was nominated to be U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service director by President Barack Obama, or that I'm a registered Democrat. So I'm sure that some may accuse me of being political for pointing this out. But those who know me know that I'm no political partisan, and my 34-year professional career speaks for itself on that point. Pointing out facts is not partisan. I've always tried to be a good man, and good professional, and I'm not going to sit and do nothing. Here's what the GOP platform says—Congress should reconsider whether parts of the federal government's enormous landholdings and control of water in the West could be better used for ranching, mining, or forestry through private ownership. The enduring truth is that people best protect what they own. The real truth is, the people do own these lands and waters. And good, professional public servants manage them for public benefit, not private profit. Read it yourself. It's an election year, and we need a true Sportsmen's Platform. Not platitudes about rights to hunt and fish, or fear mongering about threats to the Second Amendment. We need politicians who will stand up for clean air and water, for the protection of habitat, and stand behind professional public servants—local, tribal, state and federal—who dedicate their lives to conserving wild places and wild creatures. We need a professional ethic that unites us as a community. Former President cont. on page 7
Ronald Reagan united his political party in the 1980s, and coined what he called the Eleventh Amendment—Thou shalt not speak ill of any fellow Republican. We need a conservationist’s Eleventh Amendment—Thou shalt not speak ill of any fellow conservationist. Sure, we disagree from time to time, but these are professional, courteous and respectful differences.

Author Austin Kleon says, Quit picking fights and go make something!

Those in our community who sow seeds of anger and adversity must meet with what Aldo Leopold called social disapproval. If we let these people divide us, and play us off against each other, then we, and the resource we love will lose. How can we expect the faith and confidence of the public if we do not reflect faith and confidence in one another? Leaders must set this example and expectation.

We must diversify our organizations, our profession, and our community. Leaders must make this our collective priority. We need to set measurable goals and attain them. It’s a myth that talented and diverse candidates are not available, or that they do not represent the best and brightest. In fact, who is the best and brightest at the age of 21, 25, or 29? I wasn’t. We take talented people of good character, and make them the best and brightest.

The reality is that we look in all the same places, we do what we have always done, and we settle for what we have always gotten. We hire our friends, and friends of our friends. This has to change. It’s an issue of leadership, and it’s time for leaders to step up and lead.

There’s a new generation of conservationist out there. They’re in cities; they’re using iPhones and Androids; they don’t hunt or fish; they’ve never spent a night outdoors; their skin is red or black or brown; English may be their second language. We have to find them. We have to inspire and recruit and retain them. They will be the best and brightest. They will make conservation relevant.

We need a Joint Venture for Professional Diversity. We have to start today.

And finally, we all need to embrace the words of Eleanor Roosevelt: Every day, do something that scares you!

And as a boss, and the leader of the world’s largest wildlife conservation organization, I’d add—do something that scares the living hell outta your boss!

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**GFP ASKS LANDOWNERS AND HUNTERS TO REPORT DEAD DEER**

Pierre, S.D. - The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) has documented the first deer mortality in 2016 due to hemorrhagic disease, also known as epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD) or blue tongue. EHD was recently confirmed by laboratory analysis in a white-tailed deer in the southeastern part of the state.

This disease is common in white-tailed deer and is typically detected in late summer or early fall. Minor deer losses to EHD can occur in any given year in South Dakota, but weather and habitat conditions will dictate the severity of the disease. EHD is not infectious to humans.

The virus is spread by a biting midge and causes extensive internal hemorrhaging. Many deer exhibit no clinical signs and appear perfectly healthy, while others may have symptoms such as respiratory distress, fever and swelling of the tongue. With highly virulent strains of the virus, deer can be dead within one to three days. Affected deer are often found near low lying areas or near water like a river or a pond. This is due to the deer going to water to combat the high fever.

As there will be a heightened level of activity on the country-side during crop harvest and hunting seasons, GFP asks anyone who observes sick deer or finds several dead deer to contact their local conservation officer or local GFP office. This information is valuable to wildlife managers in monitoring deer populations across the state.

EHD outbreaks can be locally severe, but rarely affect a high proportion of a deer population. In rare cases, the disease can affect deer populations in certain areas of South Dakota as observed in 2012 and 2013. License adjustments were made in some units to react to these unforeseen mortality events. Deer can continue to succumb to this disease until a hard freeze reduces midge populations that carry the disease.

For more information on the EHD virus visit gfp.sd.gov/wildlife/diseases/epizootic-hemorrhagic-disease.aspx.

prices drive farmers to put land into production, rather than leave it in CRP.

"At the time of the high corn, especially, so many of these CRP acres which is the poorer ground got takenout and put into production which probably never would have happened," Reetz says. "But I don’t blame people for doing it. They saw the big dollars with the seven, eight dollar corn. Now we’re back in check with the three dollar corn, that I think a lot of this poorer ground is going to go back into a CRP program, or some type of program." Reetz says when commodity prices are lower it makes sense economically to put the poorer ground into CRP because it carries more income in the long run.

"It has to be common sense, the price has to be right, and there can’t be too much red tape or too many stipulations on these programs," Ben Lardy says.

Ben Lardy is a biologist with Pheasants Forever, in partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the South Dakota Game Fish and Parks Department. Part of his job is to help educate farmers about conservation options. He says while some programs don’t have a financial benefit, there are several that help the bottom line as well. He says he understands the need for balancing land use.

"Anything we can do whether it’s an acre or a hundred acre is still going to be beneficial," Lardy says. "CRP for pheasants is king for habitat there. But down the road, you know, we have to feed the world. I mean we have an increasing demand for production. They’re not making any more land. We have to get creative with how we can target our habitat strategies and try to maybe shift it towards a working lands system. But there’s no question, there’s still going to be room for CRP, for idle lands. It’s finding those right spots that maybe aren’t ideal to farm."

Lardy says there’s currently a high interest among farmers to put acres in CRP. Travis Runia is the senior upland game bird biologist with the Game Fish and Parks Department. He says CRP grassland is the most important pheasant habitat in the state.

"Back in 2007 we had about 1.5 million acres on the ground. Right now we have about 950,000 acres," Runia says. "And our pheasant population has declined over the last five years as some of these CRP acres have declined." He says there are limited acres allowed to enroll in the program and a ranking system that gives priority to other states. This is hindering the presence of CRP land in South Dakota.

"If this trend continues we’re going to see CRP acreage decline by probably another 150,000 acres here over the next two to three years, which is extremely alarming and very much concerning for the future of pheasants in South Dakota," Runia says.

Experts say there are two main reasons why all of this matters. First, the pheasant is the state bird, and an icon of South Dakota. And second, pheasants bring the state money. Game, Fish and Parks statistics show pheasant hunters spent over 170 million dollars in the state in 2015. More than 140 million came from out of state hunters. Biologist Brian Pauly says that’s a good reason for all South Dakotans to care about pheasant habitat.

"A lot of that money is going to some of our small communities that really rely on that as a major boost to their local economies," Pauly says. "So not only are we talking about a significant amount of money economically, but it’s a significant amount of money for these communities as a whole.

Experts add there’s at least one other reason to care about pheasant habitat in South Dakota: what’s good for the state bird is also often good for other animals, like butterflies, bees, and deer. They say good habitat can positively impact water quality and soil health as well.
Pheasants, both adult birds and chicks, were speckled on the edge of a harvested wheat field.

Nearly 40 birds were counted in a matter of seconds. “That’s a really good group,” said Travis Runia, upland game biologist for South Dakota’s Department of Game, Fish & Parks. “There’s about six broods right there.”

The broods of pheasants, aka family groups of chicks, then began to scatter into the cattails and tall grasses. That field accounted for nearly one-third of the pheasants Runia logged Tuesday southeast of Huron during one of the state’s 110 pheasant brood survey routes.

The routes, which span 30 miles, are spread across South Dakota and are surveyed annually from late-July through mid-August. Seventy GF&P observers collect the route’s data and send them to Runia to assemble for a report that’s published prior to Labor Day.

“It paints a really nice picture as far as what to expect for the hunting season in any given fall,” Runia said.

On Tuesday, starting at 6:22 a.m. sunrise, Runia started his route eight miles south and seven miles east of Huron. In total, he saw 14 broods, which average six chicks per brood, along with 22 hens and 24 roosters. That equaled a pheasant per mile (PPM) index of 4.33, which was slightly above Huron’s regional pheasant per mile index of 4.02 from 2015 and 2.92 in 2014.

But it’s only one of the 17 routes in the Huron region, which spans an eight-county area. The 10-year average for the region is 6.82 pheasants per mile. There are 13 regions in South Dakota for the annual pheasant brood survey, with the Chamberlain area as the top-producing pheasant area in the state in the past 10 years with an average of 13.32 pheasants per mile. Pierre (9.03) is second in 10-year average, Winner (7.01) is third and the Mitchell region is seventh at 5.58 PPM.

“We have data that goes back until 1949, so at this point we want to keep it as similar as possible,” said Runia, who explained that about 30 routes were added to the survey in 1993.

Andy Petersen, GF&P conservation officer in Mitchell, said Tuesday his region has seen significantly dry weather this year, which may not be good news for the pheasant chicks. He said it’s too early to tell whether there are more or fewer pheasants near Mitchell.

Last year, the statewide pheasant per mile index was at 3.8, showing an increase in bird numbers of 42 percent compared to 2013. The Mitchell region had a pheasant per mile index of 4.05, down from the 10-year average.

Route observers, Runia explained, look for days when the weather has clear skies and calm winds, and when the dew is heavy on the grass.

“That way, the birds want to move into the ditch and onto the roads to dry their feathers off,” he said.

Many routes are driven twice, with the main period running through Aug. 1-15. The highest number of the two surveys is used in the statewide survey. The same route Runia drove Tuesday produced significantly higher in July at 24 broods. That’s likely because cloud cover blanketed much the region for much of the morning, and the dew wasn’t ideal.

And, Runia acknowledges he hears several people each year discredit the survey by saying it is always boosted to help South Dakota’s economy, which, according to GF&P data, had $170 million spent on pheasant hunting in 2015. “I respond the same way I do every year. I invite those people to get up with me at 6 in the morning and ride along,” he said. “I don’t get very many takers.”

The statewide pheasant season this year opens Oct. 15 and runs through Jan. 1, 2017, on public and private land, with permission. The three-day, resident-only season, held only on public lands, begins Oct. 8.

Runia is expecting a season similar to or slightly better than last year, when the statewide pheasant per mile index was at 3.8, showing an increase in bird numbers of 42 percent compared to 2013. The Mitchell region had a pheasant per mile index of 4.05, down from the 10-year average.

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**GFP Starts their Annual Pheasant Brood Survey**

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