

**Press Release** - North Dakota Energy Forum  
Nov. 27, 2012

## **OIL INDUSTRY, WILDLIFE & CONSERVATION GROUPS ANNOUNCE BEST PRACTICES**

Bismarck, ND – Oil companies joined wildlife and conservation groups this morning at the regional office of Ducks Unlimited in Bismarck as part of an effort to work together to maintain a strong outdoor and hunting heritage and to highlight the implementation of geographic information systems (GIS) maps and Recommended Management Practices (RMP) for oil development.

Terry Fleck, volunteer chairman for the North Dakota Energy Forum, has been facilitating meetings with outdoor groups and the oil industry.

“We’ve held three meetings so far this year with wildlife and conservation groups, the North Dakota Petroleum Council (NDPC) and oil company representatives of the NDPC Regulatory Committee,” Fleck said. “As energy development continues to grow, so too is the discussion surrounding wildlife and habitat.”

Beginning in March, Fleck and the North Dakota Energy Forum invited groups and the oil industry to establish the Sporting and Oil Industry Forum to focus on wildlife and habitat issues and energy development. John Devney, vice president of U.S. policy with the Delta Waterfowl Foundation, has participated in each of the three forums.

“We aren’t always going to agree on everything, but engaging the conservation community and the energy industry together in one room and fostering this dialogue is an important step,” Devney said. “We’re at the table talking through real issues.”

Ron Ness, president of the NDPC, agrees. “We all share an interest in habitat and wildlife,” Ness said. “The outdoor experience and hunting heritage are central to many of our lifestyles, including many employed by the oil and gas industry. We encourage our operators to reduce impacts on our land and habitats. This forum and these discussions help educate all of us,” Ness added.

One of the issues the Forum has been discussing is the development of GIS maps and RMPs. The North Dakota Game and Fish Department has been working on GIS maps of select species for almost a year and presented these to the Sporting and Oil Industry Forum in June. Since that time, the Game and Fish Department has worked with companies to introduce and utilize that information.

Game and Fish, working with the NDPC, has also developed RMPs to help minimize impacts of oil and gas development. “All of us involved have worked hard to finish development of these tools, but really, that’s only the beginning,” said Game and Fish Department Director Terry Steinwand. “We’ve worked with industry almost since the beginning and they now have additional tools available that identify and highlight crucial wildlife habitat, so they can consider

potential wildlife influences while continuing to develop energy resources.”

“This is a positive step, and we encourage oil and gas field developers to utilize these datasets and RMPs,” said Ryan Krapp, North Dakota chair for the Mule Deer Foundation. “For instance, if a developer is made aware of critical mule deer habitat in the lease area, they might select an alternative development plan that minimizes or avoids habitat disturbance.”

Steinwand emphasized that the use of these tools is voluntary and that the maps and management practices are not regulatory and will not infringe on any landowners’ right to develop their property. He also noted that industry’s willingness to go beyond minimum requirements is beneficial to the landowner and habitat on which wildlife depends and will reduce impacts. Companies are already showing interest in working with the Game and Fish Department and landowners to implement these practices.

“Most landowners are conscious of habitat on their land and want to enhance wildlife,” said Blaine Hoffman of Whiting Petroleum, which frequently uses these tools in its operations. “We want to inform landowners that these tools are now available.”

Regarding federal statutory wildlife requirements, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is encouraging companies to share their development plans so that reviews of those plans can be conducted. “Input from the USFWS on federal trust resources, including threatened and endangered species and their habitats, all migratory birds and active nests, bald and golden eagles, has not yet been worked out,” said Jeff Towner, Field Supervisor of the North Dakota Field Office of the USFWS.

In addition to discussing the maps and RMPs, wildlife and conservations groups and the oil industry are working to facilitate more communication between the groups, state and federal agencies, the public and landowners.

“The Sporting and Oil Industry Forum is focusing on building relationships and opportunities to work together, improving understanding and communication, and identifying potential collaborative wildlife projects,” Fleck said.

As a result, working groups have been formed.

“This is a big task,” Fleck said. “I believe we can achieve real outcomes that serve wildlife and habitat, the hunting and fishing public, conservation community, and the energy industry. “We can have both – world class outdoor experiences and world class energy development.”

###

ATTACHMENT: Recommended Best Practices  
ATTACHMENT: Mule Deer GIS Map