

MINNESOTA STATE REPORT

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Dedicated Funding Efforts

In February 2008, the Minnesota House and Senate passed landmark legislation giving Minnesotans a chance to provide needed additional funding for our natural and cultural heritage. The Legacy Act, also known as the three-eighths bill, offers Minnesota voters a chance to amend the State Constitution to raise the state sales tax by three-eighths of one percent. If passed by a majority of the Minnesotans going to the polls in November 2008, the amendment will change the constitution to raise the sales tax and dedicate the revenue to habitat, clean water, parks and culture. The funding would not be available for agency operational expenditures but rather for specific projects and initiatives. If approved, the tax would go into effect on July 1, 2009 and would be available in FY10 as five separate dedicated accounts including:

- 33 % to restore, preserve and enhance fish and wildlife habitat and other natural resources;
- 33 % to protect and restore the state's surface water and groundwater;
- 14.25 % to support the state's parks and trails;
- 15 % to protect the state's drinking water sources;
- 19.75 % for the arts and cultural heritage purposes

DNR will be providing information about resource problems and potential approaches without violating a state law that forbids the use of state resources to promote a position on a constitutional amendment ballot question. Under the law, ballot questions are the same as contested elections and government agencies must remain neutral on the issue and not advocate for an outcome, encourage people to vote or provide details on how the agency might use the proposed funding.

Legislature 2008

During the 2008 legislative session (February – May), bonding appropriations were made for fish hatchery improvements (\$1.5 million), WMA acquisitions (\$5 million), AMA acquisitions (\$1 million), water control structures to improve water quality and provide core waterfowl habitat (\$0.5 million), and Reinvest in Minnesota Match critical habitat match to equally match private donations of land, conservation easements, or cash to the program for the purpose of acquiring or developing critical fish, wildlife and native plant habitat (\$3 million).

The Legislature also mandated that creation of a conservation angling license at two thirds the cost of a regular license and with half the possession limits. Although this was viewed as a method of retaining and recruiting anglers, DNR is concerned about the impact of potential reduced revenues on angling and habitat programs.

A new voluntary walleye stamp was created allowing those interested in supporting walleye stocking or stamp collection to purchase a five dollar stamp beginning March 1, 2009. As with other stamps (e.g., trout and salmon, migratory waterfowl, pheasant stamps) an annual report on revenues and expenditure purposes is required and a subcommittee will review the stamp and address funding issues related to stocking.

During the 2008 session, Minnesota was faced with a \$938 million general fund deficit. Fish and Wildlife's general fund appropriation was reduced by \$381,000 beginning in FY09. The 13% reduction in the \$2.9 general fund appropriation to the Division will be met by reductions in fisheries management activities and mailroom support

Hunting/Fishing Revenue and Expenditure

Recent analysis by the department found that expenditures for fisheries programs exceed angling revenues to the state's Game and Fish Fund, while expenditures for wildlife programs are less than revenues generated from hunters and trappers. In FY06-07 combined revenues of approximately \$137 million were generated by angling and hunting licenses fees, fines, and leases (53:47 angling-hunting revenues) while combined expenditures of \$139 million during the same period did not match revenues (60:40 angling-hunting expenditures). Options to address the issue will be presented in a Legislative mandated report in November 2008. A citizen oversight committee for the Game and Fish Fund has recommended an angling license increase and a general fund appropriation increase to correct the imbalance.

WMA/AMA Acquisition

Aquatic management areas (AMAs) are established to protect, develop, and manage lakes, rivers, streams, and adjacent wetlands and lands that are critical for fish and other aquatic life, for water quality, and for their intrinsic biological value, public fishing, or other compatible outdoor recreational uses. Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) are established to protect lands and waters which have a high potential for wildlife production. These lands are managed for wildlife values and for public hunting, trapping, fishing and other compatible outdoor recreational uses.

A citizens advisory committee completed its recommendations for long-range AMA acquisition goals in October 2007. Their recommendations included increased protection through fee title and easements for 1,500 miles of cold water designated trout streams and 1,100 miles of shoreline on lakes and warm-water streams and rivers by 2032. This would increase shoreline protection to 38% and 2% respectively. In FY07 the DNR purchased 2.67 miles of cold-water shoreline with a value of \$220,000 /mile and 5.33 miles of warm-water shoreline with a value of \$992,000/mile for inclusion in the AMA program.

Minnesota currently has approximately 1.3 million acres in 1,400 units in the WMA program. During 2007, 4,986 acres were purchased or donated at a cost of \$11.5 million. A citizen committee developed a plan in 2002 which recommends the additional purchase of 702,000 acres in the next 50 years.

Climate Change Planning

In recognition of the importance and urgency of developing approaches to deal with climate change, senior managers in the Division of Fish and Wildlife of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR) started two initiatives.

First, a group in Fisheries Research redesigned its long-term lake survey program in 2007 to detect early climate change impacts. The new program is called Sustaining Lakes in a Changing Environment and is designed to understand and predict the outcomes of major drivers of change (e.g., development, agriculture, invasive species, climate change) on lake habitats and fish populations (www.mndnr.gov/fisheries/slice). Data collected during the initial phases of SLICE will help habitat and fisheries researchers determine what impacts are occurring. Management practices will be tested to determine their effectiveness. With a proactive approach, future habitat and fisheries managers can base their efforts to preserve and enhance viable aquatic systems on sound, tested and true information.

Second, a Wildlife working group completed a report in May describing climate change in Minnesota, its effects on wildlife species and habitat, and recommendations for mitigating and adapting to climate change impacts for administrative, programs, research and operations staff.

Mitigation Activities: Efforts are being encouraged agency-wide to reduce consumption of fuel in fleet and facilities. Use of fleet vehicles is being analyzed and more fuel efficient vehicles (i.e., compact cars) are replacing less fuel efficient vehicles (i.e., trucks) where possible providing substantial reductions in fleet costs and energy use without compromising field office work.

The Glenwood Wildlife Area Office FAW is collaborating with a University of Minnesota Morris (UMM) campus effort to become energy self sufficient by 2010 using renewable energy sources. UMM has installed one wind turbine with plans to add two additional wind turbines for generation of electricity. A new biomass gasification facility coming on line in spring 2008 will replace the need for natural gas by using corn stover, wood chips and prairie grass. The Glenwood Wildlife Office collaborated with UMM efforts last fall by allowing the experimental harvesting of native grasses from local Wildlife Management Areas

AFWA: AFWA Climate Change Subcommittee has formed a think tank including Alaska, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, Minnesota, New York, North Carolina, Tennessee, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming fish and wildlife agencies to develop a summary statement on climate change impacts, a functional model describing approaches for agency responses, and an outline of funding needs for implementation. Minnesota DNR (i.e., Fish and Wildlife, Ecological Resources) and Organization of Wildlife Planners are providing staff support for these efforts.

Recruitment and Retention

Minnesota hired a new Hunter Recruitment and Retention Coordinator, Jay Johnson, and welcomed back Aquatic Ed Coordinator, Jenifer Mathees, in November 2007. In addition, Mike Kurre, formerly of Gander Mountain, was hired as a Mentor Coordinator for the hunter and angling recruitment programs.

DNR used new marketing strategies in 2007 and 2008 in collaboration with Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation to boost license sales including a mailing to lapsed license holders and electronic billboards to count down the days to the fishing opener. Radio advertising and promotions with St. Paul Saints and Minnesota Vikings are being planned. These marketing efforts are complimented by ongoing programs such as MinnAqua fishing clinics, Becoming an Outdoors Woman fishing clinics, and Fishing in the Neighborhood (FiN) local fishing opportunities.

FiN and MinnAqua have developed guides that list ideal places to introduce excitable, young anglers to the sport of fishing. The booklet lists 50 Twin Cities metro area small lakes

and ponds managed by the FiN program. An online guide will list family-friendly lakes in greater Minnesota

(http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/outdoor_activities/fishing/takemefishing/index.html).

In February 2008, DNR launched Take a Kid Ice Fishing Weekend, a three day weekend when anglers 18 and older did not need a license if they were accompanied by a child younger than 16 and were actively participating in Take-A-Kid Ice Fishing Weekend (<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/minnaqua/icefishing/index.html>). On the education front, a new MinnAqua Leaders Guide titled "Fishing: Get in the Habitat" was published and distributed in 2007. See the DNR website (<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/minnaqua/index.html>) for additional information on this curriculum.

In an effort to encourage youth participation in hunting, Minnesota sponsored seven special mentored youth firearms deer hunts and six special mentored youth archery deer hunts. These hunts are conducted in partnership with State Parks, Minnesota Deer Hunters Association, Bluffland Whitetails Association, USFWS National Wildlife Refuges, US Department of Defense, The Nature Conservancy, and Minnesota State Archery Association. In addition, a special mentored early antlerless youth deer season was offered in five northwest Minnesota counties to coincide with the annual Minnesota Education Association (K - 12) vacation in late October.

In partnership with the National Wild Turkey Federation, 30 special mentored youth turkey hunts were conducted in April 2008. This represents a 66% increase in opportunity over spring 2007 when 18 mentored youth hunts were conducted. Other efforts included an early youth waterfowl hunt prior to the opening of the regular season, a "Take-A-Kid" hunting weekend, and a "Future Pheasant Hunters Weekend". All of these opportunities are designed to remove barriers to participation and get more youth hunting.

The Archery in the Schools program continues to gain momentum. As of this date, there are 258 schools enrolled with 85,000 students participating and 430 certified instructors. Minnesota ranks second nationally in terms of National Archery in the Schools participation. In 2007, DNR supported legislation to change regulations lowering the minimum bow draw weight for big game to 30 pounds. Since the inception of the Archery in the Schools program which was accompanied by changes in regulations, youth archery license sales have increased by 25%.

A significant legislative initiative implemented in 2007 was the "Apprentice Hunter Validation Program." This validation allows an individual to try hunting without having completed Firearms Safety Training. Apprentice hunters must be accompanied by a licensed adult hunter. This past season, more than 2,900 individuals took their first hunts or re-kindled their interest in hunting as a result of this barrier smashing legislation.

In November 2007, a Firearm Safety – Hunter Education Program review was requested by the Division of Enforcement, which oversees the firearm safety/hunter education program in Minnesota. The review was conducted by a team of hunter education professionals including representatives from other states, USFWS, and the International Hunter Education Association. Their report was presented to the Department in February 2008 and provided feedback in the following areas: strategic plan, funding, volunteers, communication, and recruitment and retention.

Participation in Becoming an Outdoor Woman program increased 25% between 2006 and 2007. Becoming an Outdoors Family programs are now also being offered (<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/education/bow/index.html>).

Aquaculture and Wetlands

FAW submitted a report on aquaculture policy and program recommendations to the Legislature in early 2008 with recommendations pertaining to licensing criteria, license fees and incentives, application and licensing procedures, landowner notification, white sucker culture, statute recodification, and information needs. Following review and discussions, the Legislature instructed DNR to establish license and other fees required to make aquaculture licensing and enforcement self-sustaining and to develop best management practices for aquaculture to ensure the long-term sustainability of aquaculture and wetlands used for aquaculture, including, but not limited to, fish farming in man-made ponds. The Legislature also mandated that new licenses should not be granted for aquatic farm purposes on natural water bodies restored or subject to a protective easement paid for with state or federal funds. Finally, aquatic farm license applicants must notify all owners of property with direct access to the water body of their intended activities prior to the license being issued by DNR.

National Fish Habitat – Midwest Glacial Lakes Project

In the past year, state representatives convened in December 2007 at the Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference and in April 2008 at the North American Lakes Management Society Meeting. Key projects/efforts include: strategic planning, NFWF grant pre-proposals for a development of local government unit native shoreland buffer incentives program and a social survey regarding social and psychological factors that drive human behaviors on lakeshores, website development (<http://www.midwestglaciallakes.org/>), and GIS analyses.

Shoreland Management

Lakeshore habitat is under increasing pressure from development throughout the midwest states. In conjunction with other shoreland habitat restoration programs, the Fisheries Section has initiated a grant program for local government units (e.g., counties, cities, lake associations, etc.) to conduct shoreland restoration projects with individual landowners. In FY08, plans are to distribute more than \$360,000 in matching grant agreements for 36 target areas. Working with local government units rather than individual landowners increases community involvement and long-term support for shoreland restoration and protection.

National Lakes Assessment Project (NLAP)

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is leading a survey of the nation's lakes in conjunction with the states in 2007. A total of 909 lakes are included in this survey. Minnesota's NLAP effort is lead by the MPCA and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Minnesota initially drew 41 lakes as a part of this statistically-based national survey effort, and added nine lakes to allow for state-based assessment. Much data was collected on 50 lakes in 2007. Plans are to complete sampling of six basins in summer 2008. DNR is providing four Fisheries Specialists for this lake assessment project.

Fisheries Long-Range Planning

Special and experimental regulations are being increasingly used to manage fish populations in order to meet multiple and divergent social needs and interests. Public participation processes are being used to develop long range plans and guidelines for species and habitats.

Draft Long Range Plan For Muskellunge and Large Northern Pike Management Through 2020: The purpose of this plan is to guide fisheries management of muskellunge and northern pike in Minnesota for the next twelve years. The goals are to improve opportunities for trophy muskellunge and large northern pike, while also providing opportunities to harvest northern pike. The plan was developed with input from angling interests, including six workshops, two roundtables, and public comment through the DNR website. The plan describes reasonable goals and objectives that are consistent with public input, provides detailed information on the biology and management of these species, and a process for obtaining further public input as specific waters are proposed for changes in management. A draft version is available on the DNR website and is currently being reviewed internally by the agency (http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/fisheries/muskie_pike/muskiepike_2020.pdf).

Long Range Plan for Walleye: FAW recently began hosting a Walleye Advisory Committee to generate advice on the walleye management programs. The Advisory Committee is one source of public input and its perspectives will be considered along with other interests. The Committee recognizes that it is a group of interested anglers and that they don't necessarily represent all perspectives.

Information Technology

The Lake Survey Project was awarded a Minnesota Government Information Technology Recognition Award in December 2006 and a American Fisheries Society research and survey project of the year award in 2007. The Lake Survey Module is the first major component of the Fisheries Information System that stores, analyzes, and reports Fisheries' Program data from an application that is accessible to DNR staff throughout Minnesota. The Lake Survey Module allows area staff to record lake survey data into a centralized database on either office PC's or on rugged tablets while in the field. Preliminary work has begun on a second component of the Fisheries Information System pertaining to stream and river survey data.

The Work Unit Project was initiated in the past year to develop a DNR intranet budget application using a centralized database containing funding proposals and project cost estimates. The tool is being used to develop FY09 Fisheries budgets and spending plans with the intent of adapting it for FY10 Wildlife budgets and spending plans. The complex database application incorporates salary and fleet data from state accounting systems along with DNR location, activity, and project data.

Fish and Wildlife Disease Efforts

Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia (VHS): With the Wisconsin DNR announcement of VHS infecting their inland waters in May 2007, Minnesota faces two front lines in the battle against VHS – Lake Superior and the Mississippi River. A VHS control plan for Lake Superior and St. Louis River estuary was developed and implemented in early 2007. A work group developed a statewide plan to address VHS concerns in DNR operations, angler practices, regulation adequacy, identification of high risk waters and surveillance needs, dissemination of VHS information to the public, and preparation of DNR infrastructure and staff to handle VHS outbreak events. These efforts lead to legislation being passed in 2008 that enhanced regulations involving the transportation, importation, sale and taking of fish in order to better protect the state's water and fish populations from VHS and other diseases. The Legislature also appropriated funding to implement fish virus surveillance, prepare infrastructure to respond to

outbreaks, and implement control procedures for highest risk waters and fish production operations.

VHS information is provided to anglers on the DNR website (http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/fish_diseases/vhs.html) and through a recently produced brochure (http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/natural_resources/animals/fish/vhs_brochure.pdf).

Chronic Wasting Disease: In 2006, approximately 2,000 hunter-harvested deer were tested for CWD disease statewide and no infection was detected. Continued surveillance for the disease in deer exhibiting clinical sign of illness is ongoing throughout the state.

Bovine Tuberculosis: Minnesota continues to monitor this disease in northwestern Minnesota within a 15-mile radius of the area surrounding the cattle operations infected with bovine tuberculosis (TB). During the regular 2007 deer seasons, 1,449 deer were harvested in the bovine TB deer permit area. Hunters harvested an additional 120 deer in a January special hunt. Since the close of the deer hunting seasons, landowners have taken an additional 125 deer in an area that was expanded to include private lands to the north of deer permit area 101. Landowners and tenants, and their agents designated in writing, can continue to take deer without a permit in the landowner/tenant area under the provisions of a special emergency rule that took effect March 31. The rule is currently scheduled to expire August 31, 2008; however, the rule may be modified or ended earlier in the summer based on discussions with local residents and landowners.

The sharpshooting effort to remove deer in the bovine TB area was conducted for three months between February to May 2008. Sharpshooters, hunters and landowners have taken 1,207 deer since the fall hunting seasons closed. The deer population in the 164-square-mile core of the bovine TB disease management area was estimated at 800 animals during an aerial survey conducted in January before sharpshooting efforts began. Aerial sharpshooters took 416 deer and ground sharpshooters took 546 deer in and near the core area, bringing the 2008 sharpshooting total to 962 animals. In total, 2,656 deer were taken from September 2007 to May 2008.

Since the initial 2005 discovery of bovine TB in Minnesota, eleven infected beef cattle herds, all in the northwest counties of Beltrami and Roseau, were identified. In addition, 20 infected deer have been confirmed to date in the same area (within five miles of infected cattle herds), with several additional suspect deer awaiting final test results. As a result of these discoveries, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) downgraded Minnesota's federal status to Modified Accredited. This status downgrade means Minnesota producers face new federal testing requirements for cattle being shipped from Minnesota to other states. Recent legislation created the authority to control the movement of livestock into, within, and out of bovine TB zones. If USDA grants split-state status, a large part of the state will upgrade its classification, and a smaller section of northwestern Minnesota will remain at the Modified Accredited classification.

The DNR plans to continue reducing deer densities by continuing liberal hunting seasons in the fall. Additionally, enforcement of the recreational feeding ban continues and a deer-proof fencing program, currently being transferred from DNR to the Board of Animal Health, provides up to \$5,000 worth fencing materials to producers.

DNR efforts to eliminate bovine TB in wild deer are part of a cooperative effort with the Board of Animal Health and Minnesota Department of Agriculture to regain the state's bovine

TB-free status. To find out more about the state's response to this issue, go to www.bah.state.mn.us/tb/index.html

Nontoxic Shot

A human dimensions study by the USGS Minnesota Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit conducted in 2007 – 2008 is nearing completion and provides information about Minnesota small game hunter perceptions and knowledge about the use of toxic/nontoxic shot and identifies appropriate message points for information and education programs addressing the issue of restricting the use of lead shot. Minnesota DNR Farmland Wildlife Population and Research Group prepared a FAW briefing document entitled *Evidence of Lead Shot Problems for Wildlife, the Environment, and Human Health -- Implications for Minnesota* and a bibliography entitled *Nontoxic and Lead Shot Literature Review* that will be available in the annual *DNR Wildlife Research Summaries*. A DNR omnibus bill included a proposal to restrict the use of nontoxic shot on Wildlife Management Areas in the agricultural area of the state; however, this element was not passed by the 2008 Legislature.

Lead in Venison

Minnesota hosted a one-day multi-state conference in early June 2008 on the lead and venison issue. The meeting brought together representatives of midwest fish and wildlife agencies, public health and agriculture agencies, the shooting sports industry, hunting organizations, meat processors and others. The meeting had two main purposes to identify ways the wide variety of public and private interests can work together so that venison can continue to be offered at foodshelves and to identify the information that hunters and others need to know so they can reduce their risk of consuming lead from the deer harvested during the firearms season. The meeting brought together agencies that, in the past, haven't had many opportunities to work together and gave the seven states participating – Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, Wisconsin, Michigan and Missouri – a good start toward implementing a comprehensive regional effort across state lines to develop consistent programs and recommendations.

Wolf Management

FAW hired a veteran wolf biologist to coordinate the state's wolf management plan in August 2007. Dan Stark worked on the Mexican gray wolf recovery project in Arizona for seven years and will oversee the ongoing transition of wolf management from the federal government to Minnesota DNR. Minnesota has been prepared to assume wolf management responsibility since 2001 with the completion of its wolf recovery plan. In March 2007, the USFWS declared that the wolf population in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan had increased enough to declare them no longer threatened or endangered.

Lynx Lawsuits

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and others filed a complaint for declaratory and injunctive relief in US District Court for the District of Minnesota on July 5, 2006, and the Animal Protection Institute (API) filed a similar complaint on September 20, 2006. Both complaints allege that DNR authorized trapping programs result in incidental take of Federally listed endangered species, and thus these programs are a violation of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA). The HSUS suit is limited to lynx, but the API suit includes lynx, wolves, and bald eagles. DNR essentially resolved the HSUS suit on February 1, 2007, by

agreeing to obtain an Incidental Take Permit from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, as outlined in Section 10 of the ESA.

The U.S. District Court ruled in March 2008 that DNR was in violation of the Endangered Species Act by authorizing trapping and snaring within the range of Canada lynx in Minnesota. DNR has since applied for an incidental take permit with the USFWS and submitted a proposal to "restrict, modify, or eliminate the use of incidental taking...through trapping activities" to the Court.

Forest Fragmentation/Legacy Easements

The DNR and its partners have an opportunity to acquire or permanently gain easements on private lands that will allow Minnesotans to continue to reap the economic, social and ecological benefits the state's forests provide. To make the most of this opportunity, DNR Commissioner Mark Holsten formed the Forest Legacy Advisory Team. This 13-member team, representing a collection of public and private interests, developed the "Minnesota Forests for the Future" report to highlight how increasing development impacts the ability of the state's public and private forests to provide the benefits Minnesotans want. The report also highlights Minnesota's successful use of easements to protect more than 65,000 acres of private forest lands.

To better meet the increasing pressures affecting Minnesota's forests, the advisory team recommended that the framework for a Minnesota Forests for the Future program be established in state statute. The framework outlines how land easements and other tools can maintain healthy, working forests throughout the state and it describes program goals, strategies and targets.

The report can be downloaded at www.dnr.state.mn.us/forestlegacy/index.html

Agriculture and Conservation Practices

MN currently has 1.77 million acres enrolled in CRP. It is expected that due to increased land values and the current method of determining payments, the state will see the start of a downward trend. As existing 10-15 year agreements expire beginning in September 2008, it is anticipated that there may be a loss of as much as 100,000 enrolled acres.

Deer Management

While Minnesota offers a breadth of deer hunting opportunities, confusions have arisen over the years regarding most aspects of the season. The addition of new licenses, changes in season lengths and bag limits, and tagging requirements have led to confusion among some hunters. Given deer hunting has a client base of 500,000 hunters and the issues can be very divisive, it was decided that an attempt would be made to simplify the deer season wherever possible.

The Deer Season Simplification Committee (DSC) was formed by the Minnesota DNR FAW to assist with simplifying the deer hunting regulations. The DSC was comprised of 13 citizen participants representing various backgrounds and interests including deer hunting groups, new hunters, outdoor media, and individuals with local knowledge of deer hunting issues. The participants were tasked to take a top-down look at statutes and rules (regulations) and make recommendations for simplification.

The DSC met twice in December 2007 and January 2008 and examined many components of Minnesota deer hunting regulations. Ultimately, the group agreed on six major

recommendations that could simplify the deer hunting seasons including: (1) consolidate the number of deer hunting licenses, (2) consolidate the number of deer hunting zones, (3) simplify validation of license at harvest site, (4) enhance regulation book, (5) consider alternative deer registration methods, and (6) simplify legal calibers. The entire report can be found at: (http://files.mndnr.gov/outdoor_activities/hunting/deer/simplificationreport.pdf). 2008 legislation included: (1) the creation of a muzzleloader license and the ability to not sell all season and multizone license types if rules are adopted that eliminate the need for these license types (in combination these two provisions if enacted would consolidate license types), (2) elimination of license validation, and (3) standardization of legal calibers for big game.

Moose Management and Research Plan

As directed by the Legislature, DNR will be developing a moose management and research plan for Minnesota in consultation with research scientists, wildlife managers, tribal interests, other agencies with moose research and management expertise, and other key stakeholder groups. The plan will address moose populations and habitats, including, but not limited to, the northwest Minnesota herd; likely causes of observed changes and trends; moose habitat and hunting management; and monitoring, research, and evaluation needs. The plan shall establish future moose management and research goals and strategies within the context of habitat and climate trends in Minnesota. A summit of moose biologists from Minnesota and surrounding states and provinces will likely launch the planning efforts in the summer or fall of 2008.

Partnership Highlights

Since its inception in 1988 from lottery proceeds, the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund has supported Minnesota Habitat Conservation Partnership efforts. To date, nearly 103,000 acres of habitat have been restored and protected in more than 650 projects. More than \$80 million has been spent in total by the Partnership including \$19.4 million from MN Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund complemented by \$65.7 million from federal and private sources.

Other long term conservation initiatives marked significant milestones. Pheasants Forever celebrated its 25th anniversary in early 2008 and the Minnesota Migratory Waterfowl Stamp celebrated its 30th anniversary in fall 2007. DNR participated in celebrations honoring achievements for both of these significant conservation efforts.