



MINNESOTA OUT OF DOORS

Volume 5, Number 1

Spring 2016

A message from President Joe Hoffmann

Well spring is here and we are ready to get things rolling at the MCF. I hope everyone has had a chance to spend some time in the beautiful spring weather we are having currently. For those of you who couldn't make MCF quarterly meeting on March 12th which was held at the Minneapolis Gun Club in Prior Lake Minnesota I will give a small breakdown. The Minneapolis Gun Club was an ideal location for the MCF's quarterly meeting as Jim Sable the executive director of the USA High School Clay Targets League was the guest speaker. Jim talked about how he started the league, the issues he had to face, and where he see the league going in the next few years. The league started out in the early 2000's with 6 shooters and a dream to bring the shooting sports back to the youth generation. Jim's goal was to bring young people back to the outdoors doing something he knew and re-spark a flame in a dying industry. By 2008, the league consisted of 30 student athletes and in 2015 numbered around 11,000 students. Jim indicated the three main goals of organization are: Safety, kids having fun, and last marksmanship. The MN Clay Target League is by far one of the fastest growing sports in Minnesota. I'm happy to say the MCF is proud to be heavily involved with recent bills work toward continuing improvements on Minnesota shooting ranges so these kids have a safe place to shoot. Many of the MCF's affiliate clubs are also proud supporters and sponsors of local teams which I think is truly great. The Minneapolis Gun Club also just happens to be the location for the MN state high school clay target shooting championship. I can say that the club has a beautiful range as I myself was invited to shoot and did shoot a couple rounds of clays after our meeting.

At the meeting Elsa Litecky also gave an update on the MN Conservation Leadership Corps which we are happy to say is really starting to pick up momentum. We are currently seeing more and more clubs jump on board to help cultivate the next generation of conservation leadership. Savanna Harmon one of Wisconsin's CLC students attended the meeting and shared her personal experiences which provided another perspective of how this program can really benefit a diverse background of wildlife leaders.

She is currently working down the career path of wildlife law enforcement and hopes to become a game warden. The application for the MN CLC is now online at: MNCF.org under the Conservation Leadership Corp tab. If any of the clubs know anyone that might benefit from the program the MCF encourages them to apply as soon as possible. The deadline for applications is May 1st.

Another notable topic that came out of the quarterly meeting include a resolution supporting stronger anti-poaching regulations sponsored by Keith Blomstrom who is a passed MCF President and current executive board member. The resolution calls for stronger Anti-Poaching Laws in Minnesota and support for provisions that governor Dayton is proposing in the 2016 legislative session. This resolution was unanimously passed at the meeting. Dennis Mackedanz the new executive director of Turn in Poachers (TIP) was present at the quarterly meeting and explained to the group the issues that he sees which was also very helpful. He also explained how fines and restitution is distributed when it comes to game violations. I would also like to note that TIP is having a banquet at Jack and Jims in Duelm Minnesota on April 16th if you are interested in this event you must purchase your ticket by April 8th. Tickets can be purchased online through the MN Turn in Poachers webpage.

Some of our own upcoming club banquets include: The Prior Lake Sportsmen's Club/ MCF Banquet on Saturday April 2nd at the Prior Lake VFW. Tickets for this event cost \$25 dollars and non-reserved seating will open up at 4:30pm. Cocktail is at 5pm followed by a steak dinner at 6:45pm. On April 9th the MCF Regional banquet is being hosted by the Fish Lake and New Market Sportsman's clubs and the local High School Trap Teams. This banquet will be held at Ridges at Sand Creek in Jordan MN. Non-reserved seating will open up at 4:30pm and tickets costs \$25 dollars. Cocktail hour is at 5PM followed by dinner at 6:45pm. I will be attending both events and I hope to see a lot of familiar faces.



Executive Director News

Ex. Director Report

By Gary Botzek
Executive Director



While the snow melts and the weather warms, my thoughts and actions turn toward the start of the 2016 legislative session. The “late start” of March 8 is designed to have the best economic information in front of the Governor and legislature in order to know what new spending of general funds dollars can take place or not. The latest economics numbers reported a decrease of \$300 million in surplus. It is good that they waited!

There are many needs and desires for increased spending and/or tax rate reductions. By the middle of May, we will know what combination of the strategies will be implemented. In terms of natural resources investments, the following is a summary of where we are at and where we might be going in the 2016 legislative session:

The New Buffer Law:

Interest in the new buffer law remains high! The BWSR is in charge of implementing the law and they have been busy meeting with local soil and water conservation district organizations, as well as state and regional interests ranging from the MCF to the Farm Bureau. Portions of the law are already going into effect, including the excessive soil loss law. A good summary of the new law can be found on the BWSR’s website at <http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/buffers/>.

DNR has an important part to play in the implementation of the new law as well. They are in charge of producing the Buffer Protection Map for the BWSR and others. These maps will identify all the lakes and ditches that probably need to be buffered. Local review will modify the map findings and DNR expects to have the Buffer Protection Map

finalized by July 2016. More information can be found at <http://dnr.state.mn.us/buffers/index.html>.

The impact of the new buffer law took a hit early in the year when the Governor agreed with the Farm Bureau and the Republicans and limited the DNR mapping project to public water ditches only. By not requiring the mapping of private ditches (ditches on private property) thousands of miles of waterways will not be covered by the new law. According to statutes all ditches are on private property. However, all water is public waters and should be covered by the buffer requirements.

The new law will require a minimum average of a 50-foot wide buffer on public waters with a shoreland designation by November 2017 and a minimum of a 16.5-foot wide buffer on both sides of public ditches by November 2018.

While these numbers are not new in terms of the statutes, the new law squarely puts the BWSR in the leadership role to build and implement a program that works with farmers and other landowners by providing incentives and using federal and state dollars to put buffers in place. The new law will be enforced by the local soil and water conservation districts. Enforcement, needless to say, has been lacking in the past.

It is widely believed that adding buffers around water bodies will provide additional protection from pollution runoff, as well as provide additional habitat opportunities for birds, animals and pollinators.

A few counties are already implementing good buffer programs in their county. These county programs can be used as models for the rest of Minnesota. The conservation and environment community worked hard to get this proposal passed. The 2016 legislature is expected to consider “clarification” of the new law. I predict it will be successful, but will be

amended/improved upon in years to come – just like the Wetlands Conservation Act. It will take a strong federal farm bill to involve the farming community in voluntary solutions to water issues and problems.

Governor’s Water Summit Held:

Over 800 people attended the Governor’s February Water Summit held in St. Paul. Citing serious challenges facing Minnesota’s water supplies in both rural and urban areas of the state, Governor Dayton wanted to continue a statewide dialogue focused on solutions to water issues. A number of MCF members attended the Summit and shared their experiences and opinions with colleagues. The MCF is hopeful that some of the solutions and strategies discussed at the Summit could be implemented through new laws this session or administratively through the Governor’s office.

Mille Lacs Lake Management:

The new legislative session is expected to invest heavily in a number of possible solutions for Mille Lacs Lake’s walleye fishing problem. DNR closed the lake to walleye fishing on August 3, 2015 after the state exceeded the agreed upon quota of 28,600 pounds. Possible changes include a pilot walleye stocking program, a new fisheries nursery on Mille Lacs, and new staffing in the Mille Lacs area. A special Mille Lacs Fisheries Advisory Committee has been meeting regularly and will be making suggestions for change to the legislature.

Lessard-Sams Dollars:

The 2016 Legislature is expected to pass its annual Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Legacy bill generated from the sales tax revenues and constitutionally dedicated to natural resources. The Councils’ recommendations for this round of spending call for investment of another \$111 million in habitat projects! Last session the Legislature appropriated \$97 million for outdoor projects including forestry,

More news....

Executive Director Report continued....

wetlands, forest habitat, and prairie habitat. Last year's Legacy Bill also included \$228 million over two years for clean water projects from the Clean Water Fund. The bill also provided \$87 million over two years for parks and trails and \$124 million over two years for art and history projects. The Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage portion of the dollars is appropriated annually to provide flexibility and allows for the ability to shift gears and/or direction with the money. About \$60 million of the \$111 million is scheduled to go to habitat projects including \$20 million to acquire public lands, \$25 million for private land easements, and \$15 million to enhance grasslands and wetlands on public and private lands. MCF can and will support this investment!

Bonding Dollars for Conservation:

A big bonding bill can be expected in the 2016 session. The bill could reach \$1 billion! The MCF will work to see that the bill invests in WMA's, SNA's, AMA's and RIM-Reserve lands. The Governor's bonding bill contains \$72.5 million toward the DNR including \$9.5 million to implement part of the pheasant action plan.

Northern Pike Zones:

The DNR is bringing a three-zone size structure to the legislature this year. The plan would implement different sets of regulations in the northeast, north-central, and south areas of the state.

Felony Poaching:

The Governor is proposing stronger penalties that include steep restitution and substantially longer game and fish license revocations for poaching offenses. The poaching problem continues to grow. MCF will support stronger penalties.

Get the Lead Out:

The DNR is proposing a new rule that would ban hunters from using lead shot when they are using a shot gun in the taking of small game and upland birds on most state-owned wildlife management areas. Legislation may be considered to strengthen this approach or limit it. MCF supports the new rule.

Trapping Fur-Bearers/Catching of Hunting Dogs & Pets:

Changing laws relating to the design of traps and their placement received hearings and some support last session. In the center of the controversy are the "body-grip" traps that are popular in the taking of raccoons, beavers, bobcats, and other fur-bearers. Proposed changes include modifications to the entry point of the enclosed traps. The discussion is expected to continue this session.

Aquatic Invasive Species:

With the report of the catching of two more carp (a 20-pound male bighead and a

20-pound male grass carp) in the Minnesota River near New Ulm recently, the fear of Asian carp spreading deeper into our rivers and lakes is growing. Research at the University of Minnesota is targeting controlling the northern movement up the Mississippi River using sound, light, and water movement to slow or control carp movement. Chemical research to stop reproduction continues as well. I continue to serve on the University of Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center Advisory Board that provides input and feedback into the research that is being done on carp and other aquatic invasives. We will need a "research miracle" to stop or control the many aquatic invasives that continue to enter Minnesota waters through our rivers and the Great Lakes.

Waukesha Water Diversion Plan:

The MCF, working with the NWF and others, is calling on Governor Dayton to say "no" to the Wisconsin City of Waukesha's proposal to draw water from Lake Michigan for drinking water purposes. The City is requesting the withdrawal of up to 16.7 million gallons of water per day from Lake Michigan to be used for their drinking water and selling water to neighboring cities. They have a radium contamination problem and are looking for a new drinking water source. The City is considered part of a "straddling" county and is therefore eligible to apply for an exemption under the 2008 Great Lakes Compact. MCF supported the state law passed in 2008. The NWF and MCF testified against the

Waukesha proposal at a Minnesota DNR hearing held in Duluth in early March. Any one of the eight governors signed to the Compact can veto the application.

If you are interested in more information regarding items mentioned in this report, please call me at 651-293-9295 or email me at gary@capitolconnections.com. Thanks for your continued interest, involvement and participation in the MCF, NWF, conservation, habitat and the environment. We are all in this together!

Habitat Restoration

The Minnesota Conservation Federation signed a resolution at their annual meeting in 2015 to support a habitat and water quality restoration project in Lake Pepin.

This restoration project has been selected by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as a "new start" in 2016, in response to a request submitted by the Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance and Audubon Minnesota to consider the feasibility of island construction and backwater dredging in this area.

The Corps will receive an initial \$50,000 this month to put a project team together and develop a fact sheet. If all goes well, the Corps' Mississippi Valley Division will determine that there is a federal interest in moving forward with a feasibility study.

This is an important milestone, as the feasibility study is critical to determine what will work best for habitat and water quality, and the cost-benefit of alternative designs.

If implemented, the project would provide localized improvements in water clarity and aquatic vegetation. The project would also provide deep water habitat for overwintering fish species and may improve recreational access for small boats. For more information contact Rylee Main at (630) 806-9909, or rylee.main@lakepepinlegacyalliance.com.

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FEDERATION**

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***Minnesota Conservation Federation
2015-16 Officers***

Joe Hoffmann, President
vacant, 1st Vice President
Don Nickolay, 2nd Vice President
Rylee Main, Treasurer
Steve Maurice, Secretary

**ANY ITEMS FOR PUBLICATION MAY BE E-MAILED
OR SENT TO THE MINNESOTA CONSERVATION
FEDERATION — info@mncf.org**

Quarterly Meeting
Saturday, June 11th
9:30 am
REI Bloomington
750 W. American Blvd.
Bloomington, MN 55420
952-884-4315

We hope to see you there!



Submit your club's news to *Minnesota Out of Doors* Newsletter

The Minnesota Conservation Federation's *Minnesota Out of Doors* newsletter is a place for member clubs to present news about their accomplishments. Club news and/or photos can be submitted to: Tammy Abrahamson
Minnesota Conservation Federation, 542 Snelling Avenue South #104, St. Paul, MN 55116, or by e-mail to info@mncf.org. All submissions should be directed to Tammy. The deadline for submissions for the next newsletter is June 17, 2016.