



MINNESOTA OUT OF DOORS

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Summer 2017

A message from Executive Director, Gary Botzek

Minnesota's 2017 Legislative Session(s) Filled with Excitement and Frustration

The regular legislative session adjourned on schedule on May 22 and midnight. At 12:01 a Special Session began! Four days later the special session ended. The result was 10 budget bills totaling \$46 billion to fund the state government and its programs for the next two years. In these budget bills and others were policy statements and changes affecting the way government relates to its people and its businesses.

The 2017 legislative session tested the very basics of conservation and environment policies and funding that most people have begun to take for granted. Conservation programs, projects, and funding strategies for habitat, buffers, wetlands, clean water, local control, state control, more regulation, less regulation were introduced, debated, and passed in bills that were vetoed and now signed into law.

There is an old saying that dates to 1866 that says: "No man's life, liberty, or property are safe while the legislature is in session." Truer words may have never been spoken! This legislative truism can be stated for conservation and environmental issues, as well.

Buffer Bill/Law:

The Governor's new buffer law that will provide vegetation on farm fields and waterways came under attack early in the session. Bills were introduced and passed to repeal the buffer law, delay the implementation date by one or more years, to spending millions of dollars to get land owners and others to do what they should be doing now! The compromise reached provides for an eight-month waiver or grace period that can be used by farmers this November 1. The deadlines for installing of buffers stays the same. Public waters need to be "buffered" by November 1, 2017 and public ditches will need to be buffered by November 1, 2018. The waiver provision grants farmers more time to install buffers on their fields, streams, and waterways.

Wetlands Action:

The BOWSR Wetlands credit bank run out of state dollars last year. This "banking" of wetland credits allows counties to move the migration of certain wetlands being migrated for local roads out of the county of construction. A short-term solution was passed that put general funds in the bank and bonding dollar were included for

the bank, as well. While there were bills to change the requirements of wetland migration for road work they were parked alongside the road.

PILT (Payment in lieu of taxes:

PILT (payment in lieu of taxes) was back on the front burner again this session. These payments are made to counties and townships to pay property taxes on public lands. In some cases, the PILT amounts are too low and some cases the PILT payments are too high depending on what type of public lands. Legislation was proposed that would have required setting aside PILT payments for 30 years from the Outdoor Heritage fund for funded projects so that PILT payments would be "reserved" for years to come. Problem is that the Lessard-Sams dedicated funds go away in less than 20 years if a new constitutional amendment is not passed by the legislature and the voters to extend the dedicated sales tax. If that money goes away who pays the PILT? The taxpayers, out of general funds, as they do now. That provision made it all the way to the tax conference committee before it was removed and replaced by increases in some of the PILT payments to certain types of public land. These payments/funds will continue to come from the general fund—not the outdoor heritage legacy funds!

No Net Gain:

Bills that would establish a "no net gain" of public lands in all counties were introduced and got traction. It was argued that some counties have too much public lands and should not be forced to add more public lands due to the fact the property taxes are not paid on public lands. The bills were modified to limit the no net gain language to counties north of Highway 2. At one point this language was included in three bills. After much work, the language was removed from all bills.

Budget Bill for the Environmental and Natural Resources Agencies:

The Environment and Natural Resources Budget Bill ended up with policy language that totaled twice as many pages in the bill as the funding provisions! A DNR lead shot study is called for and a two-year moratorium was placed on the DNR in terms of moving forward on banning lead shot on WMAs. Other provisions in the bill include allowing the use of blaze pink during deer hunting



Ex. Director Report Continued....

and all muzzleloader users will be allowed to use a scope on their gun. The MCF's bill calling for a DNR study on a state shooting range facility was funded at \$30,000.

Hunting & Fishing License Fee Increases:

The adult resident deer hunting license fee was increased from \$30 to \$34 per year. The resident fishing license was increased from \$22 to \$25 per year. The daily state park permit was raised from \$5 to \$7 and the annual state park fee was raised from \$25 to \$35 per year. These increases take place on March 1, 2018.

Most of the sporting community supported the increases and worked for their passage. Note that the increases were never included in the budget bill until the Governor demanded that they be included.

Heritage Legacy Bill:

The Lessard-Sams Dedicated Sales Tax appropriation bill was changed to move dollars away from the citizen council recommendations to fund local implementation of the buffer law. These moved "dedicated" clean water funds total \$22 million and caused a major debate over the constitutionality of the action. The Legacy bill does provide \$212 million for clean water projects, \$105 million of outdoor heritage projects, and \$90 million for parks, trails, arts, and history projects.

LCCMR Bill Passes:

The LCCMR Funding Bill was amended to move away from citizen council recommendations on climate change and other research projects to provide dollars for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), a voluntary program to pay farmers to take steps to protect and improve water quality. The lottery dollars total \$64 million.

Bonding Bill Passes!

A \$998 million bonding bill was passed and signed into law that provides \$10 million for CREP and \$18.7 million for parks, trails, and state recreational areas.

My Take on All This

The legislative process is part offense and part defense. Whether you are an advocate of clean water, clean air, education, welfare, conservation, or the environment you do have to stand up and fight for what you think/know is right. If you do not stand up and fight the "other side" wins! The best defense was played

by Governor Dayton who continued to "kick out" bad bills one after another until he got resolve on the issues most important and dear to him.

The legislative process is very much like making sausage—it doesn't look good but usually it tastes good!

The assaults on the state's land and water laws and regulations are very different from the land and water stewardship that we all want to see and experience. The success of the 1998 "right to hunt & fish" and the 2008 Dedicated Sales Tax for clean water and habitat appear to be the high-water marks for a strong outdoor ethic and strategy. These were great offense efforts lead by the conservation and environmental communities. However, the past ten years have seen more defense then offense in terms of legislative help, expansion, and funding priorities.

Sportsmen/Sportswomen Involvement:

I am proud of the work that the "orange hats" crowd did during this legislative session. They showed up in numbers numerous times to display interest, concern, and displeasure with many of the decisions that were being made along the way. MOHA and others deserve a lot of credit for organizing and alerting the sportsmen and sportswomen to attend hearings in person, as well as, communicate with key legislators on key issues and concerns. It was a good message delivered by good messengers! We may have won the 2017 legislative battle, but.....

Where do we go from here?

I believe it is imperative that we deal with the natural resources issues being championed by new legislators and the new majority. Whether it is "no net gains" in public lands, increased targeted PILT payments, license fees levels adequate to support the management of the resources, implementation of buffers by and for farmers and local government, a love for and desire to protect and restore wetlands, or a ban on lead shot, sportsmen and sportswomen must be engaged earlier and stay engaged on a day-to-day basis. We must meet and deal with key legislators, chairs of committees, and legislative staff to be involved in the formulation of solutions/answers to the key natural resources issues of the state. We can't always wait for the Governor to "kick out" a bad bill or idea. A hockey team needs more than a goalie! The key to a good defense may very well be a good offense!

**Minnesota Conservation Federation
and the New Market Sportsman's Club**

**THIRD ANNUAL MEMORIAL
5 GUN SALUTE**

≥ 6 chances to win ≤
(Each winning ticket goes back in barrel)

<p>1. Henry Big Boy Lever Rifle</p>  <p><small>.44 MAG/SPL 20" octagon barrel</small></p>	<p>4. Smith & Wesson M&P</p>  <p><small>Sport II</small></p>
<p>2. Savage Axis XP</p>  <p><small>.243 22" w/3-9x40 Camo</small></p>	<p>5. Smith & Wesson M&P9</p>  <p><small>9mm Luger</small></p>
<p>3. WIN Super-X 4</p>  <p><small>12 GA 3.5" 28" Camo</small></p>	<p>6. Wicked Ridge Invader G3 Crossbow</p>  <p><small>Package w/ ACU-52</small></p>

**Drawing to be held at Doherty's Tavern
on October 9, 2017**

Winner need not be present to win. Only 1,500 tickets will be sold

Ticket Price \$10
Questions, call 612-666-2227




Annual Assembly Information...

	
MINNESOTA CONSERVATION FEDERATION	
ANNUAL ASSEMBLY	
<i>Registration for meeting & meals</i>	
★ SEPTEMBER 9-10, 2017 ★	
Registration fee per person is	
● \$75.00 person and includes ● lunch and dinner on Saturday	
REGISTRATION DEADLINE: AUGUST 7, 2017	PAYMENT SEND PAYMENT TO: MN CONSERVATION FEDERATION 542 SNELLING AVE. #104 ST. PAUL, MN 55116
NAME OF REGISTRANT: _____	
PAYMENT: _____ CHECK ENCLOSED FOR \$ _____	
_____ CHARGE MY CREDIT CARD \$ _____ (VISA OR MASTERCARD)	
CARD # _____ EXP. / ____ CCV ____	

	
MINNESOTA CONSERVATION FEDERATION	
ANNUAL ASSEMBLY	
<i>Hotel Info</i>	
THE MCF BOARD CORDIALLY INVITES YOU	
★ SEPTEMBER 9-10, 2017 ★	
WE LOOK FORWARD TO SPENDING THE WEEKEND WITH YOU	
MEETING TIMES SAT. SEPT. 9: 9AM-3 PM SUN. SEP. 10 9AM-NOON	ST. JAMES HOTEL 406 MAIN ST. RED WING, MN
HOTEL RESERVATIONS CAN BE MADE BY CALLING 651-388-2546 ROOM RATE OF \$179.00 PER NIGHT PLUS TAX RESERVATIONS MUST BE MADE BY AUGUST 7, 2017 FOR THIS RATE!	

**MINNESOTA CONSERVATION
FEDERATION**

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

Annual Assembly

September 9-10, 2017
9 am
St. James Hotel
Red Wing, MN

**We hope to see you there!
Registration information inside!**



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 September 15, 2017.