

NEWS RELEASE

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**SPORTING AND OIL INDUSTRY FORUM ANNOUNCE
WILDLIFE & HABITAT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM**

Project aimed at enhancing mule deer, bighorn sheep, and elk habitat is serving as pilot project. Applications for projects available beginning December, 2013

BISMARCK, ND – The Sporting and Oil Industry Forum is launching a new program to enhance wildlife and habitat in North Dakota and help increase access to the outdoors. The Sporting and Oil Industry Forum, started in 2012 and facilitated by the North Dakota Energy Forum, brings sporting, wildlife and conservation groups together with the North Dakota Petroleum Council and member industry companies to discuss energy development and wildlife and habitat. Outdoor groups and industry representatives have been working together for a year to develop criteria and an application form that will be used to evaluate wildlife and habitat projects for collaborative support and potential funding. Sporting, wildlife, conservation groups and oil industry companies with projects may submit applications through December 31, 2013, for first quarter 2014 evaluation.

“The outdoors is an important part of North Dakota’s quality of life and economy,” said Marshall Johnson, Regional Director with the Mule Deer Foundation (MDF). “With the growth we are seeing in North Dakota population and oil activity, it is important that we continue working together to enhance our habitats and increase access for sportsmen and women and to preserve our outdoor heritage now and for future generations.”

Serving as a pilot project for the program is a prescribed burn of approximately 200 acres that will enhance nearly 3,000 acres of privately held rangeland for mule deer, bighorn sheep and elk. The project, which is being led by the Mule Deer Foundation under consultation of North Dakota Game and Fish Department (NDGF) biologists, includes a prescribed burn of juniper at Tracy Mountain 13 miles southeast of Medora late 2013 or Spring 2014. Juniper has overrun the acreage, shading out nutritious native grasses, shrubs and forbes important to big game species. Funding for the project will also allow the rangeland to continue to be enrolled in the NDGF Private Land Open to Sportsmen program (PLOTS).

Additionally, MDF’s Johnson is working with Continental Resources for reclamation for several oil pads on the 3,000 acre working ranch owned by Kim Shade. Shade purchased the ranch about twenty years ago. “I think what the MDF, Continental Resources, and others are doing with this project is a good thing,” said Shade.

“This project will help improve critical habitat for North Dakota’s mule deer, bighorn sheep and elk populations in North Dakota Badlands,” said Ryan Krapp, North Dakota Mule Deer Foundation State Chair. “In addition to restoring these rangelands, the project will also keep this prime location open to public access for at least another six years under the PLOTS program.”

"The oil and gas industry remains committed to preserving the quality of life in the areas where we operate, and this includes protecting the outdoor opportunities and traditions that so many North Dakotans know and love," said Roger Kelley with Continental Resources. "We want to be good neighbors and enhance existing habitats and we look forward to doing so through our collaborative efforts with wildlife groups and the Sporting and Industry Forum."

So far, the Mule Deer Foundation, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Continental Resources, EOG Resources, Hunt Oil Company, QEP Resources, WPX Energy and the North Dakota Petroleum Council have pledged financial support to help fund the \$68,000 project. More than \$14,000 in proceeds donated by participants of the First Annual Oil Can! Fishing Derby held in conjunction with the Bakken Rocks CookFest this past summer will also go toward this and other Sporting and Oil Industry Forum projects.

This new projects program is a unique opportunity for groups and industry to work together to enhance wildlife and habitat. It is independent of other programs, such as the Outdoor Heritage Fund, and is an additional opportunity for groups to seek potential funding or even match funding for other projects, small or large in scale.

The Sporting and Oil Industry Forum Projects Committee will begin accepting applications for other projects December, 2013. Criteria and applications for project evaluation are available at www.ndenergyforum.com. For more information about the projects program or with questions, contact Marshall Johnson, Regional Director for the Mule Deer Foundation, at 406-850-8785.

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