



QUALITY DEER MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

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Date: 16 October 2019
To: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
From: Jacob Pries, Policy Intern
Re: Proposed Easement Refuges Amendment

On behalf of the Quality Deer Management Association (QDMA), we would like to respectfully request that you consider the valuable impacts of increasing public access to North Dakota's sportsmen and women on easement refuges throughout the state. The QDMA is a national nonprofit wildlife conservation organization dedicated to ensuring the future of white-tailed deer, wildlife habitat and our hunting heritage. The QDMA has over 60,000 members nationwide and our membership includes hunters, landowners and natural resource professionals.

By potentially increasing access to sportsmen and women through easement refuges, you have an extremely valuable opportunity to further conservation and the success of your state's economy. With this increase in access and hunting opportunities, it increases the possibility of preserving a white-tailed deer hunting tradition that is so deeply rooted in the history of North Dakota. Whitetails are the most popular big game animal in the U.S., and whitetail hunters are the foundation of a nearly \$67 billion hunting industry. According to the National Shooting Sports Foundation, approximately three of every four hunters pursue whitetails and according to the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, \$872 million was raised by hunting license fees just last year. Additionally, since 1939 state fish and wildlife agencies have received over \$62.1 billion in funds directly from sportsmen and women. Hunters are the original conservationists. Their vital contributions to conservation and the economy provide a substantial benefit that will come from allowing hunting access through these easement refuges.

According to the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, North Dakota's sportsmen and women contribute \$222 million annually to the state's economy and support 3,464 jobs. North Dakota's economy stands to benefit immensely with an increase in access to public hunting lands. We respectfully request that you take into consideration the weighty economic impacts that North Dakota stands to benefit from in giving public hunting access to sportsmen and women. The product that could potentially come out of this increase in access is simple, and that is the next generation of public land stewards. By increasing the access opportunities for sportsmen and women, you help remedy an access problem that keeps Americans from enjoying the full potential of their public lands. As you allow for those individuals to garner experiences on our nation's public lands, you allow for those individuals to develop an unbridled passion for them that will last a lifetime. This passion turns into action, this action turns into conservation, and this conservation turns into generations of wildlife for the people of North Dakota to enjoy. On behalf of the QDMA, we would like to thank you for your time and consideration of our comments on this matter.

Respectfully,

Jacob Pries
Policy Intern
Quality Deer Management Association