

Viewpoint

Ducks Unlimited hatches scheme

GUEST EDITORIAL

By WES TOSSETT

IN 2005, we had a record number of wildfires, and a record number of acres of forests were burned over. This year, we are well on our way to breaking both of those records again. This disaster is the direct result of the enviro-extremists, like the Sierra Club, infiltrating all levels of the USDA Forest Service and bringing continuing litigation to stop all logging, thinning and otherwise progressive management of our forest resources.

When comparing pictures of the Black Hills and Rocky Mountains from the year 1900 to today, it is estimated that we have about twice as many trees west of the Mississippi now as we had then, but they are too thick, undersized, diseased, and subject to pine beetle damage and firestorms. Also, they are lowering local water tables, so that springs and creeks are drying up. Roadless and primitive areas are expanding all over, so that firefighting is hampered drastically.

This needless waste of one of this country's most precious natural resources should sicken us all. It is the main reason why the price of lumber has tripled in the past two decades, and

Key Points

- Ducks Unlimited is influencing USDA and the Farm Service Agency.
- New partnership will unfairly increase competition for land.
- Ducks Unlimited backs fat-cat Southern hunters, not Midwest farmers.

it hits closer to home every time you buy a 2x4.

In the past couple of years, I have been reading bits and pieces in all of the conservation propaganda that I receive about how Ducks Unlimited is forging a "Memorandum of Understanding" with USDA.

In September, I saw where DU just signed a "working agreement" with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and now they have formed a "partnership" with the Farm Service Agency.

The fruits of this latest endeavor weren't announced at some agricultural forum or farm meeting, but rather at a North American Duck Symposium! It targeted the Prairie Pothole Region of Iowa, Minnesota, Montana and especially the Dakotas, in spite of the fact that virtually all of the ag groups in these states have resolutions calling for fewer land-retirement programs.

When U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns was at the North Dakota

State Fair in 2005, he showed surprise at the extent of this opposition and acknowledged there might be "some" downsides.

This latest scheme will add 100,000 additional Conservation Reserve Program acres to this region with 40,000 in North Dakota and another 40,000 in South Dakota, which is DU's prime target area. Now that this infiltration of USDA by a wildlife-at-any-cost propagation group is out in the open for all to see, will the National Wildlife Federation, The Nature Conservancy and the Sierra Club be far behind?

This latest move by outside interests comes at the same time as our marketing gurus are speculating as to how high 2007-crop bids are going to have to be in order to assure adequate supplies for our oilseed and row crops this coming year.

We in the Dakotas think our walleye fishing industry is a \$2 million to \$3 million industry, which is important to our economy, but it doesn't hold a candle to the winter-long duck-hunting industry of Arkansas and its surrounding neighbors of Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana, Tennessee, Kentucky and Missouri. All of these states, plus DU, realize that if the Dakotas don't raise their ducks, they can't shoot them! These fat-cat DU boosters, with their \$3,000 to \$5,000 Berettas and their \$1,000 to \$2,000 re-

trievers, think it's great sport if they lay waste to our barren prairies — after all, they are good ol' boys! If you don't believe it's all about shooting ducks, just watch a couple of DU programs on the Outdoor Channel some night.

This latest scheme by the "wildlifers at any cost" is to raise an additional 60,000 ducks per year. The last time I checked, there wasn't a single species of prairie duck that was endangered, or even threatened. Don't forget, boys, it's all about shooting them, and with our short and weather-dependent seasons, they'll still get the ducks, and we'll get the duck droppings.

Like tree huggers, duck huggers don't live in the real world, and it should be against the law for government agencies to partner with lobbying organizations. Who knows, maybe PETA will be next!

Lakota, N.D., has wised up and is not scheduling any DU "fun nights." But, sad to say, Lakota is the exception.

Any grain farmer in the Midwest who belongs to DU or participates in one of their alcohol-enhanced fundraisers is shortsighted and as naïve as the one-legged man who went to his county fair and tried to enter the kicking contest!

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