



*Terry Steinwand, Director
North Dakota Game and Fish Department*

Welcome to the 2012 Conservation Private Land Open To Sportsmen Guide. We're excited to once again provide this informative booklet that features lands open to public hunting across North Dakota.

Our goal is maintain 1 million PLOTS acres for hunters to access, but to make sure the habitat is of the highest quality to attract and harbor those animals we love to hunt and have become part of North Dakota's heritage. Access plus habitat will always increase your chances for harvest success.

The string of three consecutive winters was finally broken in 2011-12, providing a much needed break for wildlife across the state, including those animals that hunker in the quality cover found on state-owned or managed wildlife management areas and PLOTS tracts.

Almost all wildlife species have shown signs of recovery thanks to the mild winter and good spring conditions. The crucial time for upland birds is spring and early summer, and the dry, relatively warm nature of this past spring likely helped birds.

I've mentioned many times that it's a critically important time in North Dakota as Conservation Reserve Program acres continue to decline across the state, making what remains even more important for wildlife production. Approximately one third of the PLOTS acreage contained in this guide is CRP. North Dakota has lost more than 600,000 CRP acres this year, with more to follow in the future. As CRP acreage is removed from the landscape, we'll have to shift our efforts to other areas with high value habitat.

Our philosophy continues to be that the public should have the greatest opportunity possible to access and utilize the state's wonderful resources. Based on past surveys, the majority of hunters utilizing PLOTS are satisfied with their experience. This PLOTS Guide provides one part of the puzzle in informing the sporting public which lands are accessible.

The PLOTS program continues to be a widely supported program, but it's not meant to be the only areas we hunt. Don't forget about those areas that aren't in PLOTS. Approximately 95 percent of the land in North Dakota is privately owned, which means that many animals are residing on private lands. Take advantage of PLOTS and other public hunting opportunities, but I encourage you to take the time to acquaint, or reacquaint yourself with those people in rural areas that make their living off the land.

I continue to emphasize how important it is to respect the land on which you hunt and the game you pursue. And also respect those utilizing the same area you might be hunting. We have a ongoing obligation to respect the lands private landowners allow us to access, be they in the PLOTS program or not.

We have wonderful hunting and fishing opportunities in North Dakota and there are there are many people who are envious of what we have. Remember to respect landowners, animals, the land and other hunters. By doing so, you will be rewarded for your experience.

Terry Steinwand