

President's Report –

We set another record for our Winter Meet at the end of February – seventeen years in a row. Our first winter meet was put together by Jeremy Duckwitz in Carrington. Jeremy arranged the use of a recently vacated grocery store in downtown Carrington. In the early days, most time was dedicated to fur handling a variety of furbearers. Like all trapper and fur hunter gatherings, everyone left better for attending and a bit more educated on the matters important to us.

Every event doesn't just happen – it is the result of hard work and great people. So many “THANK YOU'S” are in order – the planning committee; the volunteers who set up the building; the folks who prepared and presented their demonstrations; those who donated to the auction (and those who spent some of their hard earned money); our entertaining auctioneer; the lunch bunch; the clean-up crew, and of course, those of you who took the time to spend your day at the Winter Meet.

We helped Tom Kean's family with moving some of his trapping equipment. The proceeds from the sale of the equipment was donated to our fur harvester education program. We thank Faye and her family for that decision, and for those that knew Tom, we're sure he would approve. Some items remain for sale and are listed on our website at www.ndfhta.com.

Jim and Jason Sackman made a large donation of older magazines to the association earlier this year. We were able to move some of them at the auction, but much remains. The list is also posted on our website if you are interested. I was able to purchase a box which contained a stack of 70's and early 80's vintage North Dakota Outdoors. Some very interesting reading from days gone by. We'll have some of those articles in future issues of the Dakota Skinner.

The association fundraiser for this year is a three-gun raffle. A special thank you to Steve Takacs for purchasing the firearms and working through the paperwork with folks. Tickets are available directly from Phil Mastrangelo, or from any Officer or Director. The drawing will be held July 1, so don't hesitate to get tickets. The drawing will be here before you know it. There is a raffle flyer on our website at www.ndfhta.com.

Here are the minutes of the business meeting held on February 29, 2020:

Officer, directors, and guest introductions were made. The meeting was called to order by Rick Tischaefter at 12:45 PM. The Secretary's report was read by Rick Tischaefter. Motion to approve as read by Phil Mastrangelo, second by Sam May. M/C. The Treasurer's Report was provided to all members present. Motion to approve as provided by Rod O'Clair, second by Tim Johnson. M/C. John Bradley, Executive Director of the North Dakota Wildlife Federation gave a brief update on legislative matters and federation business for the year. District 1 Director Garrett Volk gave an update for the summer rendezvous. Garrett is looking for ideas on demonstrations and locations. Garrett also brought up the ideas of a young trapper mentoring program and a fur promotion program as something we need to work on for the future. Contact him with any ideas. Old Business - Bob Gangl Memorial Award winner Maxwell Peltz was introduced earlier in the meeting by Phil Mastrangelo. New Business – Motion to donate the leftover food from lunch to Giving Hearts (local food pantry) by Frank Odell, second by Phil Mastrangelo. M/C. Motion to annually renew our association's membership with North Dakota Wildlife Federation until revoked by Lloyd Jones, second by Rod O'Clair. M/C. Motion to adjourn at 1:15 PM by Phil Mastrangelo, second by Marlyn Staiger. M/C.

The furbearer work group meeting is usually at the end of April or for this year, may be at the end of May. In either regard, some topics of discussion will be a statewide bobcat opportunity and a

fisher/marten harvest season in the Turtle Mountains. My hope is for a cooperative meeting with positive results. Stay tuned.

On a sad note, longtime furbearer biologist Steve Allen passed away in February. Steve was a very hard worker and a true furbearer biologist. He got his hands dirty, spent his time in the field, and was fortunate enough to spend his entire career of 33 years a furbearer biologist. Steve's priority was the resource, and the trapping and fur hunting community was the tight second. He was always willing to share what he knew and even though Steve's been retired for almost 20 years, North Dakota remains better for all he did. There will be a memorial for Steve in Bismarck sometime in July.

Fur handling question of the month: If I'm trapping muskrat and beaver in the spring, at what point should I stop due to diminishing pelt value? There are two indicators – the first is bite marks, and you'll see those when you remove the pelt from the carcass. The second is shedding, and you can determine that by pinching a small amount of guard hairs from the center of the back and slightly tugging on them. If you end up with guard hairs between your fingers, the shedding process has begun. After ice out, muskrats are usually good for about 10 – 14 days; beaver may stretch things out about three weeks. Conditions do vary, so you'll need to be observant.

For the folks who are former NAFA shippers, I again apologize for how things played out last fall. What occurred was certainly a surprise to me as the telephone calls came in about bad checks in September. NAFA was always terrible with communication between their leadership and the receiving agents, so not knowing the details of their financial mismanagement didn't come as a surprise. What was a surprise is that the NAFA corporate officers, the NAFA Board of Directors, and more importantly to us as wild fur shippers, every Director in the Wild Fur Shippers Council knew of the problems and failed to act in a responsible manner to correct that behavior. Nothing short of criminal activity for those responsible.

I get current information through a website created by a Canadian company assigned to NAFA's dissolution. As of this writing, plans are to move the unsold items remaining at NAFA through an auction and private treaty sale conducted by Fur Harvesters Auction. That is their action plan for the unsold inventory. It is easy to say that NAFA debt far outweighs anything that could be done to cover that debt. Earlier, corporate plans were to make good on all the bad checks issued from the August 2019 sale, pay their employees, and settle debts with the receiving agents. Nice plan, but reality says different. Don't hold your breath if you happen to be in one of those three categories. Again, my apologies for the way things turned out.

That's about it for now. Remember to keep your membership current and be informed. As we go about our business calling or trapping, consider sharing your travels and experiences with someone who has yet to know these activities. Until next time, take care, be safe and responsible, and enjoy what Mother Nature and North Dakota have to offer. Catch 'ya, Rick