



**NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION®**

*People and Nature: Our Future Is in the Balance*

Northern Rockies Natural Resource Center

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## **NO Water, NO Ducks, NO Hunting**

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*Land Tawney, Regional Representative*

Cool weather starts the anticipation, overhead flights of honking geese and whistling ducks cause some to salivate, and before we know it, once again the waterfowl season is upon us.

My strongest memories as a child are cold foggy mornings in the duck blind down the Bitterroot River with my father. This is where my conservation ethic was formed. I want to ensure this opportunity to foster a conservation ethic is provided for our children's future. At first look it appears these opportunities will be plentiful, waterfowl populations are healthy and unprecedented conservation efforts to restore wetlands are being lead at the national level by groups like Ducks Unlimited and the National Wildlife Federation and locally by outfits like the Teller Wildlife Refuge in Corvallis.

But, there is a grave threat facing waterfowl today that has the potential to trump the conservation work accomplished by the hard work and dedication of conservation-minded individuals for the past 75 years, "Global Warming."

Recently I traveled to North and South Dakota to tour the Prairie Pothole Region (PPR), America's "Duck Factory" where 80% of the ducks on the continent are produced. I was inspired by the sheer numbers and diversity of waterfowl present. Ducks from the PPR supplement populations in all four major North American Flyways. This Region, which includes the North East corner of Montana, is dominated by a diverse array of wetlands left behind by reseeded glaciers. Temporary and seasonal wetlands are what waterfowl depend on to produce broods. These types of wetlands are most susceptible to warming temperatures as they are shallow by nature.

Experts say that average temperatures could rise 2-6 degrees Celsius in the next 50 years. This would accelerate evaporation, and lower water levels in most wetlands, leading to the loss of up to 91% of the habitat available for duck production. Simply put...**NO WATER, NO DUCKS, NO HUNTING!**

As I looked out into the PPR and thought of passing this legacy on to my grandchildren, my heart sank...this may be something I will just be able to talk about. Then I started thinking about other resources in Montana at risk. Glacier Park quickly came to mind. Already we are seeing the glaciers dwindle away...only to be increased by a rise in temperature of 2-6 degrees. Lately we have been inundated with forest fires...the severity and frequency of these fires stand to increase with global warming.

What about our world famous trout streams...when I got back home to Missoula I spoke with my friend Bruce Farling at Montana Trout Unlimited...the news wasn't good. Cold water fish depend on just that...cold water. Rising temperatures translate into rising water temps, making some rivers and streams uninhabitable for trout. Another factor at risk that effect trout: high elevation snowpack. Snowpack serves as a natural water system, slowly releasing water into streams and groundwater in the spring and summer and then recharging in the fall and winter. Global warming has the potential for dramatically altering this cycle by reducing the amount of snowpack. As air temperatures rise, snowpack likely would develop later and melt earlier, by summer we could see drastically reduced stream flows having an adverse effect on trout populations.

Montana stands to loose not only our fabled natural treasures and recreational opportunities, but also a huge economic force generated through tourism.

All is not lost. Recently the United States Senate adopted a bi-partisan resolution proclaiming that Global Warming was taking place, humans were contributing to Global Warming, and that the United States needs to adopt mandatory measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. For lack of a better word, the "climate" is right to contact your Congressional Delegation and urge them to be proactive when it comes to reducing greenhouse gases, neither one of Montana's Senators voted for the resolution. Here at home, Governor Brian Schweitzer has touted developing alternative energy resources in Montana, we need to encourage him to proceed and follow through with these thoughtful and innovative ideas to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

In general, Montana citizens should reduce their energy consumption to reduce emission of greenhouse gases. To find out what you can specifically do and to read National Wildlife Federation's new report, "The Waterfowler's Guide to Global Warming" visit: [www.nwf.org/globalwarming](http://www.nwf.org/globalwarming).

From our greatest conservationist President Theodore Roosevelt, "I admire the man and woman who take the next step, not those who theorize about the 200<sup>th</sup>."

Take the next step! Our children stand to reap the benefits we sow today.

This has been Land Tawney, Regional Representative for the National Wildlife Federation. Thanks for listening.