



# Conservation Connection



**A Minnesota Legislative Outdoor Newsletter: Created by Kim Scott and Alexandra David**

**Sponsored by: Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, Fergus Falls Fish and Game Club,  
Fish Lake Conservation Club, Izaak Walton League, MN Musky and Pike Alliance,  
MN Sharptail Grouse Society, Outdoor News, Pheasants Forever, Sportsmen for the BWCA\***

**January 31, 2025**

**Important Dates:**

- Monday, March 31, 2025: Legislative break for Eid
- April 11, 2025 at 12:00 PM - Monday, April 21, 2025 at 12:00 PM: Legislative break for Easter and Passover
- May 9-10: 77th Minnesota Governor's Fishing Opener in Crosslake
- May 19: Constitutional deadline for adjournment for the 2025 Legislative Session

**Legislative News Highlights**

**Negotiations between Minnesota House Republican, Democratic leaders stall:** which likely means a continued boycott by Democratic-Farmer-Labor members that's now more than two weeks old. The new normal in the House, which is currently home to 67 Republicans and 66 Democrats: Minnesota Secretary of State Steve Simon, presiding over a half-empty chamber, asks members to bow their heads in prayer; members and staff then recite the Pledge of Allegiance; members take attendance on a roll call; and Simon declares that there are not enough members present to conduct business. Republican House leader Lisa Demuth, R-Cold Spring, told reporters Wednesday that she didn't meet with Democratic leader Melissa Hortman, DFL-Brooklyn Park, and had no plans to do so again in the near future . . . House Democrats want written assurance that Republicans will refrain from attempting to unseat one of their members. Republicans want to elect a speaker and control House committees for the next two years — even after a special election for an open seat in the north metro that's expected to bring the chamber back to a tie . . . At stake is the status of Rep. Brad Tabke, a Shakopee Democrat who won his reelection by 14 votes in a contest marred by 20 missing ballots. A judge ruled in an advisory opinion that Tabke would have won anyway, and a do-over is not needed. The Minnesota Constitution grants the House the power to seat its own members, however, and Democrats fear Republicans will refuse to seat Tabke. All 66 House Democrats have been boycotting the Capitol since Jan. 14 in an effort to deny Republicans a quorum and control of the chamber. [Read more.](#)

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**House GOP sues secretary of state, accusing him of overstepping authority as presiding officer:** The lawsuit comes in the wake of [a Supreme Court ruling](#) last week that declared a quorum in the House of Representatives is a static 68 members . . . House Republican leaders Lisa Demuth and Harry Niska, the petitioners, now say in a court filing that Simon has ignored their constitutional right to “compel the attendance of absent members” and has “unilaterally” convened and adjourned the House without recognizing any motions. [Read more.](#)

**Doron Clark (DFL) wins SD60 Special Election:** The special election to fill the open seat in Senate District 60 following the passing of DFL Sen. Kari Dziedzic Tuesday broke the temporary tie in the chamber. Doron Clark (DFL) received 7,783 votes, 90.9%, and Abigail Wolters (GOP) received 746 votes, 8.7% When Clark is seated, the DFL will control the Senate, 34-33.

**Minnesota Senate Republicans fail in attempt to expel Woodbury DFLer facing burglary charge:** Minnesota Senate Republicans failed Monday to compel a vote to expel Democratic Sen. Nicole Mitchell over her pending first-degree burglary charge from an incident last year in Detroit Lakes. The motion was the first attempt by the GOP to oust Mitchell this session although the party tried several measures last year and have a pending ethics complaint against her . . . Sen. Jordan Rasmusson, R-Fergus Falls, brought the motion against Mitchell, noting that her criminal trial was to start Monday in Becker County before it was postponed by the judge until [after the session](#). Rasmusson said Mitchell has “refused to offer a compelling explanation for her conduct” last April, which he termed as “felony burglary and terrorizing an elderly family member.” Rasmusson’s motion was ruled out of order after a lengthy back-door discussion that involved the two current Senate presidents: Sens. Bobby Joe Champion, DFL-Minneapolis, and Jeremy Miller, R-Winona. [Read more.](#) Expelling Sen. Nicole Mitchell would require 45 votes in the state Senate; at least 12 DFLers would have to join the GOP to expel Senator Mitchell.

**Another bill aims to end Minnesota’s shotgun zone for deer, this time giving counties the chance to decide:** The Minnesota Senate is considering eliminating the state’s shotgun zone again this year, but it’s seeking that change in a different manner than that of last year’s bill, which fell apart as legislators sought certain county exemptions. [Read more.](#)

**Environmentalists sue to keep momentum on nitrate pollution solutions:** Wary of a new federal administration that seeks more environmental deregulation, several groups are suing the state Agriculture Department and Pollution Control Agency to ensure progress in cleaning up nitrate pollution in southeast Minnesota. The lawsuit, headed by the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy (MCEA), seeks to get state courts involved in enforcing updates to Minnesota’s nitrate standards across the board. They also want to reopen the process behind some of the rules for commercial manure and fertilizer application and get more public feedback. [Read more.](#)

**DNR expands fight against CWD after the deer disease crops up in Hennepin and Clay counties:** The positive test results were detected in antlered bucks harvested by hunters during the firearms season. The two findings will trigger new surveillance measures that will affect many deer hunters in Deer Permit Areas 266

and 701 . . . This week's announcement is the second blast of bad news in the past three weeks regarding the health of Minnesota's whitetail deer population. On Jan. 8., the DNR announced a [startling increase in the prevalence of CWD](#) in deer located in the state's southeastern corner. Because computer modeling now predicts the disease spreading to 15% of deer in that area in 2008, the DNR has cancelled an off-season culling program there that was designed to keep the disease in check. Following the latest detections, DNR will likely follow its oft-utilized CWD Response Plan calling for three years of testing deer harvested in the affected deer permit areas. The permit areas will be redrawn and categorized as CWD management zones. Typically in those zones, the DNR mandates CWD testing for any deer harvested during the opening weekend of the firearms season. If more positives are detected during the three-year sampling period, testing is extended. [Read more.](#)

**A special muskie regulation on Minnesota's Leech Lake?:** Leech Lake and its muskies have become ground zero in debate about forward-facing sonar and whether new regulations could protect big fish . . ."With the advent of techno advancements in angling, including FFS and rapid information exchange, catch-and-release muskie mortality appears to have soared. The expansive refuge of deep/open water is now bare ground - nowhere for the muskies to hide. The biggest muskies are concentrated in predictable areas. Handling stress, following the rigors of the spawn, makes increased mortality of the most valuable fish an unsustainable issue on the muskie population, " the report states. [Read more.](#)

#### **Select DNR News releases**

- [Action plans outline strategies to enhance habitats for ducks and pheasants](#): Area wildlife managers across Minnesota soon will begin planning and implementing updated strategic conservation efforts designed to foster stewardship of ducks, pheasants and their habitats.
- [Sign up for firearms safety certification](#): Though most hunting seasons are more than seven months away, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources encourages anyone who plans to take a firearms safety class to sign up now.
- [Chronic wasting disease confirmed in wild deer in 2 new Minnesota deer permit areas](#): Cases confirmed in DPA 266 near Hawley and DPA 701 near Greenfield

#### **Last Week at the Legislature:**

The House of Representatives canceled scheduled hearings this week due to the Supreme Court decision on quorum.

On Tuesday at 3:00 PM, Senate [Capital Investment](#) heard overviews from Senate Counsel and Senate Fiscal staff. See: [Bonding Basics](#) and [Budget Presentation](#). The committee will also heard from the following agencies regarding the Governor's Capital Investment recommendations: [Metropolitan Council](#), [Minnesota Department of Natural Resources](#), [Minnesota Pollution Control Agency](#) (see also: [MPCA Statewide drinking](#)

[water contamination mitigation](#)), [Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources](#) (see: [Local Government Road Wetland Replacement Program](#)), and [Minnesota Department of Human Resources](#).

At 3:00 PM, Senate [Agriculture, Veterans, Broadband and Rural Development](#) met to hear a [presentation](#) from the Office of Broadband Development and presentations from broadband providers on changes to broadband statutes enacted last session. The committee also heard two bills relating to CWD: [S.F. 0553 \(Wesenberg\)](#): Farmed Cervidae fencing requirements provisions modifications (see: written testimony in support from [Minnesota Elk Breeders Association](#) and [Minnesota Farm Bureau](#), and [Report](#): Moratoria on Cervid Farms is not Effective at Controlling the Spread of Chronic Wasting Disease prepared by Minnesota Elk Breeders Association, Minnesota Deer Farmers Association, North American Elk Breeders Association, and North American Deer Farmers Association; and [S.F. 0659 \(Wesenberg\)](#): Certain duties transferal from the commissioner of natural resources to the Board of Animal Health (see: [Bill Summary](#)).

On Thursday at 8:30 AM, Senate [Taxes](#) discussed a number of bills including [S.F. 0345 \(Klein\)](#): Nonprofit bird preservation organizations sales and use tax exemption authorization: see also: [Senate Research Summary](#), [Fiscal Note](#), and letters in support of the bill from: [Ducks Unlimited](#), [Pheasants Forever](#), and [Ruffed Grouse Society](#).

#### **Next Week at the Legislature:**

Note: House committee hearings may be rescheduled if and when the House GOP and DFL agree on a power-sharing agreement.

On Monday, Senate [Jobs and Economic Development](#) will convene to hear an [overview](#) of Explore Minnesota and her from Ida Rukavina, Commissioner, IRRRB, and Al Becicka, Deputy Commissioner, IRRRB for an overview of the IRRRB.

At 12:30 PM, Senate [Judiciary and Public Safety](#) will discuss a number of bills, including: [S.F. 0011 \(Rest\)](#): Exemption modification for firearm storage units.

On Tuesday at 3:00 PM, Senate [Environment, Climate, and Legacy](#) will hear the following bills: [S.F. 0770 \(Hawj\)](#): Outdoor Heritage Fund appropriation and certain land leveraging for federal grant funds authorization provision; [S.F. 0689 \(Wesenberg\)](#): Bear hunter preference points accumulation for youth authorization; [S.F. 0742 \(Wesenberg\)](#): Use of purple paint authorization in lieu of signage prohibiting trespassing; [S.F. 0574 \(Eichorn\)](#): Pokegama Bridge trail system safety improvements appropriation; and [S.F. 0811 \(Hauschild\)](#): Eating certain beavers prohibition repealer. The committee will also hear from the MPCA regarding the 2025 report on PFAS and lead/cadmium laws implementation, as required by the 2024 legislature.

On Thursday at 3:00 PM, Senate [Environment, Climate, and Legacy](#) will hear several Arts and Historical appropriation bills. They will also hear [MN DNR - Permitting Gas Resources Under a Temporary Regulatory Framework Report](#) and [S.F. 0540 \(Wesenberg\)](#) Impact of eagles on loons study requirement provision.

### **Bills Introductions of Interest:**

#### **Environment and Natural Resources:**

##### **Bipartisan Legislation:**

**Senators Hawj and Lang introduced--[S.F. No. 770](#):** A bill for an act relating to natural resources; appropriating money from the outdoor heritage fund; providing for leveraging certain land for federal grant funds; amending Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 97A.056, by adding a subdivision. Referred to the Committee on Environment, Climate, and Legacy.

**Senators Hauschild, Farnsworth, and Kupec introduced--[S.F. No. 588](#):** A bill for an act relating to natural resources; appropriating money for Silver Bay Trailhead and trail development at Redhead Mountain Bike Park. Referred to the Committee on Environment, Climate, and Legacy.

**Senators Wesenberg, Eichorn, Drazkowski, and Hoffman introduced--[S.F. No. 742](#):** A bill for an act relating to natural resources; authorizing the use of purple paint in lieu of signage prohibiting trespassing; amending Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 97B.001, subdivision 4. Referred to the Committee on Environment, Climate, and Legacy.

##### **DFL Legislation:**

**Senator Kunesh introduced--[S.F. No. 733](#):** A bill for an act relating to pipelines; providing for the disposition of abandoned pipelines; requiring a pipeline abandonment plan; amending Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 216G.02, by adding subdivisions; proposing coding for new law in Minnesota Statutes, chapter 216G. Referred to the Committee on Energy, Utilities, Environment, and Climate.

##### **Republican Legislation:**

**Senators Drazkowski and Miller introduced--[S.F. No. 619](#):** A bill for an act relating to legacy; appropriating money to clean and reestablish earthen dams in certain counties; requiring reports. Referred to the Committee on Environment, Climate, and Legacy.

**Senators Lucero, Coleman, Eichorn, Gruenhagen, and Utke introduced--[S.F. No. 718](#):** A bill for an act relating to energy; abolishing prohibition on issuing certificate of need for new nuclear power plant; amending Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 216B.243, subdivision 3b. Referred to the Committee on Energy, Utilities, Environment, and Climate.

**Senator Jasinski introduced--[S.F. No. 727](#):** A bill for an act relating to environment; repealing clean car rules; repealing Minnesota Rules, parts 7023.0150; 7023.0200; 7023.0250; 7023.0300. Referred to the Committee on Environment, Climate, and Legacy.

**Senators Wesenberg, Green, Eichorn, and Drazkowski introduced--[S.F. No. 767](#):** A bill for an act relating to natural resources; requiring the commissioner of natural resources to provide unimpeded access to state forest roads for certain commercial purposes; amending Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 89.002, subdivision 3. Referred to the Committee on Environment, Climate, and Legacy.

#### **Game and Fish:**

##### **Bipartisan Legislation:**

**Senators Drazkowski, Eichorn, Hauschild, Kupec, and Hoffman introduced--[S.F. No. 660](#):** A bill for an act relating to game and fish; eliminating shotgun zone for taking deer; amending Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 97B.031, by adding a subdivision; repealing Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 97B.318. Referred to the Committee on Environment, Climate, and Legacy.

**Senators Wesenberg, Green, Eichorn, Drazkowski, and Hoffman introduced--[S.F. No. 689](#):** A bill for an act relating to game and fish; allowing accumulation of bear hunter preference points for youth; amending Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 97B.405. Referred to the Committee on Environment, Climate, and Legacy.

##### **Republican Legislation:**

**Senators Wesenberg and Johnson introduced--[S.F. No. 632](#):** A bill for an act relating to game and fish; requiring annual open season for wolves; amending Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 97B.645, subdivision 9. Referred to the Committee on Environment, Climate, and Legacy.

**Senators Wesenberg, Green, Eichorn, and Drazkowski introduced--[S.F. No. 657](#):** A bill for an act relating to game and fish; authorizing emergency importation of minnows to ensure adequate bait supply; amending Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 97C.515, by adding a subdivision. Referred to the Committee on Environment, Climate, and Legacy.

**Senators Wesenberg, Green, Eichorn, Drazkowski, and Westrom introduced--[S.F. No. 659](#):** A bill for an act relating to agriculture; transferring certain duties from the commissioner of natural resources to the Board of Animal Health; amending Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 35.155, subdivisions 4, 7, 11; repealing Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 35.155, subdivision 15. Referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Veterans, Broadband, and Rural Development.

**Senator Wesenberg introduced--[S.F. No. 687](#):** A bill for an act relating to game and fish; prohibiting taking elk except where causing damage; amending Minnesota Statutes 2024, sections 97A.475, subdivision 2; 97A.485, subdivision 6; 97B.515, subdivisions 1, 4; repealing Minnesota Statutes 2024, sections 97A.433; 97B.515, subdivision 2; Minnesota Rules, parts 6232.4300; 6232.4600. Referred to the Committee on Environment, Climate, and Legacy.

**Senator Westrom introduced--[S.F. No. 739](#):** A bill for an act relating to agriculture; allowing the importation of live Cervidae to certain accredited facilities; amending Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 35.155, subdivision 12. Referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Veterans, Broadband, and Rural Development.

**Senator Wesenberg introduced--[S.F. No. 741](#):** A bill for an act relating to natural resources; authorizing the use of unmanned aircraft to assist in locating and recovering deceased big game; requiring a report; amending Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 97B.115. Referred to the Committee on Environment, Climate, and Legacy.

**Senators Wesenberg, Eichorn, Draskowski, Green, and Anderson introduced--[S.F. No. 747](#):** A bill for an act relating to natural resources; returning authority over farmed white-tailed deer to the Board of Animal Health; modifying the statutes governing Cervidae farming; appropriating money; amending Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 35.155, subdivisions 1, 4, 10, 11, 12; repealing Minnesota Statutes 2024, sections 35.155, subdivisions 11a, 15; 35.156, subdivisions 3, 4, 5; Laws 2023, chapter 60, article 7, sections 12; 13. Referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Veterans, Broadband, and Rural Development.

**Senators Wesenberg, Green, Eichorn, and Draskowski introduced--[S.F. No. 766](#):** A bill for an act relating to natural resources; requiring an open season for moose during any year in which there is an open season for elk; amending Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 97B.515, subdivision 2. Referred to the Committee on Environment, Climate, and Legacy.

#### **DFL Legislation:**

**Senator Hauschild introduced--[S.F. No. 811](#):** A bill for an act relating to natural resources; repealing a prohibition on eating certain beavers; amending Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 97B.667, subdivision 3. Referred to the Committee on Environment, Climate, and Legacy.

#### **Outdoor Recreation:**

##### **Bipartisan Legislation:**

**Senators Hauschild, Eichorn, and Kupec introduced--[S.F. No. 592](#):** A bill for an act relating to natural resources; adding a grant-in-aid surcharge to the all-terrain vehicle registration fee; increasing fee for nonresident all-terrain vehicle state trail passes; amending Minnesota Statutes 2024, sections 84.922, subdivision 5; 84.9275, subdivision 1. Referred to the Committee on Environment, Climate, and Legacy.

**Senators Hauschild, Farnsworth, Eichorn, and Kupec introduced--[S.F. No. 593](#):** A bill for an act relating to natural resources; appropriating money for all-terrain vehicle trails and studies. Referred to the Committee on Environment, Climate, and Legacy.

**Senators Hauschild, Farnsworth, Eichorn, and Kupec introduced--[S.F. No. 594](#):** A bill for an act relating to natural resources; appropriating money for all-terrain vehicle trails. Referred to the Committee on Environment, Climate, and Legacy.

**Republican Legislation:**

**Senators Wesenberg, Lieske, Bahr, Lang, and Farnsworth introduced--[S.F. No. 796](#):** A bill for an act relating to environment; exempting off-highway vehicles made for children and related items from the definition of a juvenile product under Amara's Law; amending Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 116.943, subdivision 1. Referred to the Committee on Environment, Climate, and Legacy.

**Firearms:**

**Republican Legislation:**

**Senator Wesenberg introduced--[S.F. No. 658](#):** A bill for an act relating to public safety; requiring a person who steals a firearm to report the theft promptly to law enforcement; appropriating money; proposing coding for new law in Minnesota Statutes, chapter 624. Referred to the Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety.

**Senators Lucero, Draheim, Farnsworth, and Wesenberg introduced--[S.F. No. 712](#):** A bill for an act relating to public safety; providing for the right to carry without a permit; providing for an optional permit to carry; amending Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 624.714, subdivisions 2, 3, 7, 15, 20, 23, by adding subdivisions; repealing Minnesota Statutes 2024, sections 624.714, subdivisions 1a, 1b, 16; 624.7181. Referred to the Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety.

**Senators Lucero, Mathews, Draheim, and Bahr introduced--[S.F. No. 713](#):** A bill for an act relating to public safety; allowing permitted and trained school staff to carry firearms; amending Minnesota Statutes 2024, sections 609.66, subdivision 1d; 624.714, subdivision 18, by adding a subdivision; proposing coding for new law in Minnesota Statutes, chapter 299C. Referred to the Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety.

**Senators Lucero, Eichorn, Gruenhagen, Drazkowski, and Draheim introduced--[S.F. No. 719](#):** A bill for an act proposing an amendment to the Minnesota Constitution; adding a section to article I; protecting the right of the people to keep and bear arms. Referred to the Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety.

**Senators Drazkowski and Wesenberg introduced--[S.F. No. 846](#):** A bill for an act relating to public safety; providing for the right to carry without a permit; providing for an optional permit to carry; amending Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 624.714, subdivisions 2, 3, 7, 15, 20, 23, by adding subdivisions; repealing Minnesota Statutes 2024, sections 624.714, subdivisions 1a, 1b, 16; 624.7181. Referred to the Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety.



**DFL Legislation:**

**Senators Oumou Verbeten and Mohamed introduced--[S.F. No. 667](#):** A bill for an act relating to crimes; modifying the definition of crime of violence for firearms crimes; amending Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 624.712, subdivision 5. Referred to the Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety.