



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 15, 2022

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\$9.7 Million Raised for Wildlife in 2022



SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH – The 2022 Western Hunting & Conservation Expo (Hunt Expo) closed on February 13 after four busy days with nearly 47,000 people walking the 460 booths on 680,000 square feet of the Salt Palace Convention Center in Salt Lake City, Utah. Hosted by the Mule Deer Foundation and Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife, the event is their primary fundraiser and the record-shattering \$9.7 million raised from show passes, auctions, tag sales, and other fundraisers will be a significant boon to conservation. In addition, MDF hosted its first-ever Mule Deer Summit that featured top scientists and policy makers who discussed the opportunities and challenges facing mule deer management across the West.

“After two years since the last Western Hunting & Conservation Expo, there was clearly a lot of enthusiasm and demand shown by both the exhibitors and attendees and the event exceeded expectations,” commented Mule Deer Foundation President/CEO, Joel Pedersen. “I’m particularly proud of the meetings with MDF’s state and federal partners including at our inaugural Mule Deer Summit where we all committed to work together to make a difference for mule deer and black-tailed deer across the West.”

The Mule Deer Summit provided the opportunity for Pedersen to spotlight MDF’s significant investment of \$9.9 million matched by \$35.8 million to improve nearly 265,000 acres and 115 miles of fencing. The morning session of the Summit featured presentations by top mule deer experts talking about using science to direct conservation action, how states and the federal government are working through Secretarial Order 3362 to step up projects, the impacts of development on mule deer, and how chronic wasting disease is affecting mule deer and hunting.

The afternoon invite-only session allowed MDF leadership along with senior U.S. Department of Agriculture and Department of the Interior staff and state wildlife agency directors, to dig more deeply into how the partners can work together to build even broader landscape habitat conservation and restoration projects to benefit wildlife. MDF also launched a new video “Ensuring the Future” during the Friday night conservation banquet that shows how the organization is building from its foundation to implement these large-scale conservation efforts in priority areas. Targeting the migration corridors and seasonal ranges that are identified by new scientific research will make a greater cumulative impact on mule deer and black-tailed deer conservation.

The 2022 Hunt Expo featured evening events that offered camaraderie as well as the opportunity to raise significant funds for conservation efforts. The evening events raised \$585,000 through ticket sales with the new Thursday night Super Banquet engaging a crowd of 800 people in games and drawings, and the Friday and Saturday auctions attracting sold out crowds of nearly 2,000 people. There was heated bidding for auction items with tags being sold at record prices. The top sellers included the Arizona Statewide Mule Deer Tag that sold for \$400,000, Utah’s Antelope Island mule deer tag that sold for \$310,000, the New Mexico Big Game Enhancement Package that sold for a record \$300,000, and the Colorado Statewide Mule Deer tag that sold for \$105,000. For each of these tags, most of the sale price goes directly back to the state’s wildlife agency to use for habitat projects to benefit the species, for example 100% of the Arizona tag is used by Arizona Game and Fish for mule deer conservation projects. In addition, the Friday night Conservation Banquet included remarks by Department of the Interior Deputy Secretary Tommy Beaudreau and a keynote address by “Lone Survivor” author Marcus Luttrell. And during the Saturday night banquet MDF’s Director of Field Operations Mike Laughter received a Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Award for his efforts to help protect the 8,100-acre Cinnamon Creek property near Ogden.

“Twelve tags in our evening auctions broke records and three more matched records,” noted Pedersen. “With at least 80% of the funds raised on those tags getting back on the ground in those states for conservation programs, it proves how important this show is and how committed our partners are.”

Exhibitors also noted the brisk business that they did on the Expo show floor, suggesting significant pent-up demand after the two-year pandemic. Most outfitters were booking out by at least two years and outdoor manufacturers of rifles, optics, and other equipment sold quickly.

“The 2022 Western Hunting & Conservation Expo was an absolute success,” said Bruce Pettet, President and Chief Executive Officer for Leupold & Stevens, Inc. “It was fantastic to be back at the show in person alongside our core consumers, who helped raised millions of dollars for conservation. I want to thank our partners at the Mule Deer Foundation for their dedication, both to hosting the Expo and to ensuring the conservation of mule deer, black-tailed deer, and their habitat. We look forward to returning next year.”

The 2023 Western Hunting & Conservation Expo will be held February 2 to 5 at the Salt Palace Convention Center. Next year’s event will expand by 130,000 square feet offering even greater access to more companies. Stay tuned to the WHCE website at www.huntexpo.com to plan your travel to next year’s event.

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