



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: February 9, 2023

Contact: Ray Crow, (801) 973-3940, ray@huntexpo.com

2023 WESTERN HUNTING & CONSERVATION EXPO CLOSES AFTER RECORD-BREAKING TAG SALES AND ATTENDANCE RAISE NEARLY \$14 MILLION FOR CONSERVATION

Salt Lake City, Utah: The 2023 [Western Hunting & Conservation Expo \(Hunt Expo\)](#) closed on February 5 after four busy days with packed halls of people walking the 544 booths on more than 511,000 square feet of the Salt Palace Convention Center exhibit halls in Salt Lake City, Utah. Most notably, the event once again shattered records raising nearly \$14 million from show passes, auctions, tag sales, and other fundraisers. Hosted by the Mule Deer Foundation and Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife, the Western Hunting & Conservation Expo has become one of the most important conservation fundraising and consumer hunting events in the country.

“To be part of this Western Hunting & Conservation Expo—to be in the room when two different mule deer tags sold for the most ever for auction tags—and to know that those funds will go back down on the ground for conservation was truly something special,” commented Mule Deer Foundation President/CEO, Joel Pedersen. “I’m proud of the hard work of all those

who made this year's Expo such a success and to know that we have created a can't-miss event for passionate hunters and the entire outdoor industry."

The 2023 Hunt Expo evening events once again raised significant funds for conservation efforts. The Thursday night Super Banquet engaged a crowd of 1,100 people in games and drawings, and the Friday and Saturday auctions attracted sold-out crowds of nearly 2,000 people each night. Perhaps most remarkable were the many record-breaking tag sales at the Friday and Saturday evening banquets including the two highest ever prices for conservation auction tags. Friday, February 3, Utah's Antelope Island Mule Deer Tag sold for \$500,000, making it the highest selling conservation tag in history, but that record stood for less than 24 hours when the Arizona Statewide Mule Deer Tag sold for \$725,000 the next night. Also noteworthy was the Texas desert bighorn tag sold at Expo for the first time that brought \$175,000—well more than it has ever sold for before. The Alberta, Canada Minister's Special Elk and Deer Licenses sold for \$85,000 and \$225,000, respectively. It's important to note that most of the sale price for the auction tags goes directly back to the state and provincial wildlife agencies 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 and 90% of the Texas bighorn tag will be used in their bighorn sheep program. In addition, most states have a comparable tag available for draw that allows all hunters to have the chance at the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Evening entertainment at the banquets included American Idol runner up Hunter Girl on Thursday night, U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Robert Bonnie and Medal of Honor recipient Clint Romesha on Friday night, and music by Ned LeDoux on Saturday night.

"This year's Western Hunting & Conservation Expo broke nearly every record on the books," said Troy Justensen, president of Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife. "Attendees, exhibitors, and the rest of us were absolutely blown away at the energy and excitement that emanated from this year's show. There's nothing like it in the hunting industry, which is also proven by attendees who travel from virtually every state in the union and beyond to participate. We are already looking forward to making it even bigger and better next year."

The 2024 Western Hunting & Conservation Expo will be held February 15 to 18 at the Salt Palace Convention Center. Stay tuned to the WHCE website at www.huntexpo.com to plan your travel to next year's event.

###

About MDF

The Mule Deer Foundation is the only conservation group in North America dedicated to restoring, improving and protecting mule deer, black-tailed deer and their habitat, with a focus on science and program efficiency. MDF is a strong voice for hunters in access, wildlife management and conservation policy issues. MDF acknowledges regulated hunting as a viable management component and is committed to recruitment and retention of youth into the shooting sports and conservation. Get involved at www.muledeer.org or call (801)973-3940.

About SFW

Headquartered in North Salt Lake, Utah, Sportsmen for Fish & Wildlife is a charitable, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. The mission of SFW is to promote the protection and enhancement of wildlife habitat, assist in providing quality wildlife management programs, educating the public about the role hunters play in wildlife conservation, and perpetuating the family tradition of hunting and fishing. Visit www.sfw.net or call 801-936-1386.