

# Conservation Partners



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[www.nfwf.org](http://www.nfwf.org)



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# From the Director



Let's face it, times are tough. The costs of fuel, fertilizer and just about everything associated with managing a property for quality deer are at record levels and climbing almost daily. When you combine this with the struggling U.S. economy and political uncertainty, it's not difficult to understand why many people are in a gloomy mood these days.

Despite my last name (you know, Murphy's Law), I've always been a "glass half-full" kind of guy and believe we should step back and take a deep breath. I don't mean to trivialize anyone's economic struggles because paying \$4 for a gallon for gas hurts my pocketbook just as much as the next person.

But, are times really that bad? Last time I checked, we were still living in a country that affords personal freedoms in speech, politics and religion just to name a few. We also have a model governing document called The Constitution which guarantees these freedoms. One such freedom, the right to keep and bear arms, was recently upheld by the Supreme Court in the Heller case. This landmark decision reaffirmed the right of individuals to keep and bear arms.

While some familiar with the case may argue this particular ruling has little to do with deer hunting, think again. By chance, while working as a deer biologist in Tasmania, Australia in the mid-90s, I became swept up in that nation's "gun grab." In 1996, a civilian massacre similar to that at Virginia Tech sparked a rapid and overwhelming backlash against firearms and firearm owners.

Before I knew it, I was serving as a firearms consultant on the "uniform national gun laws" proposed by the Federal Government. For nearly five weeks, I reported to Parliament House in Tasmania and met with leaders of both major political parties (Labor and Liberal), seeking ways to make the legislation less detrimental to the future of firearm ownership, hunting and game management. In the end, however, the legislation passed largely unamended.

While the pro-gun rallies, newspaper articles and TV documentaries are firmly etched in my memory, what stands out most vividly is the day I accompanied a couple of friends to the local police station to turn in their now illegal firearms. These were not AK-47s, but everyday hunting firearms such as Remington model 742 semi-automatic deer rifles, Browning A-5 shotguns and Winchester model 12 pump-action shotguns. I can assure you the "Aussies" didn't just lie down and hand over their guns. However, their firearm rights were not protected by something like the Second Amendment, and firearm ownership and associated activities such as hunting, shooting and self-defense were not considered socially acceptable or culturally relevant.

So, when you find yourself getting down about what's wrong in America, I encourage you to pause and reflect on those who paid the ultimate price to enable us to live in a country where we can own firearms and hunt with a minimum of government oversight and scrutiny. Count your blessings that we can own land and manage deer and other wildlife for ourselves and future generations to enjoy.

Where else can organizations like the QDMA even exist, let alone prosper? Where else can anyone, regardless of economic status or social class, enrich their lives each fall by participating in the sacred, time-honored tradition of deer hunting? We are indeed lucky. Yes, times are tough, but our worst of times are better than the best of times in most of the world.

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