Territorial Update

by Loretta Cruz

I remember the very first time I shot at a territorial. I was coming off my first season of primitive biathlons and was lamenting to some of my new muzzleloading friends that I was going to miss shooting my muzzleloader. That's when Harland Blodgett invited me to the Vermont territorial. He did a really good job of selling it. Little did I know at the time that this was his very first territorial too. Had that first territorial experience not been so positive, I probably never would have gone back. From that moment on I have enjoyed the comradery and competition of the territorials. With all things; some years I take it more seriously than others. I mean, life gets in the way impacting how often we shoot and how prepared we are for the upcoming territorial season. As I have watched the participation numbers rise and fall over the years for the territorial, I wonder what we can do to get more people participating in these events, or for that matter to just continue participating in them. I think there are several things we as NMLRA members need to do to ensure that this program continues into the future. First, if you have never attended a territorial competition you should. I think you would really enjoy it. Second, for those veteran shooters bring someone new to a territorial, show them what it's all about. I'm a prime example that it only takes one territorial to become hooked. Finally, I believe that we need to be ambassadors for our sport. When new people attend a territorial we need to be welcoming, good role models, and offer help when needed. If each one of us would try to do one of these things during the next territorial season I can guarantee we would see our numbers grow. So, to you dear reader, I issue this challenge, help make our sport and our Territorial Matches grow in 2016.

By the Numbers

Despite the loss of the Colorado territorial due to flooding caused by massive rainfall, the territorial program did well. The overall numbers were very similar to last year. The most popular aggregates continue to be the offhand, hunters, and flintlock aggregates. For the past five years these three aggregates have topped the list. The Mid-Western states took top honors by selling the most aggregates. Nebraska sold 131 aggregates, Iowa 122 and Minnesota 111. This year New Hampshire had the most competitors with 47, Iowa drew 43 competitors, and Maine was close behind with 40. The three New England states hosting territorials attracted the most female shooters. Idaho, Iowa, and New Hampshire respectively brought in the most junior shooters.

Territorial Changes

There is only one major change to this year's territorial program. After seeing great success in the number of shooters taking advantage of the revolver aggregate, an additional target will be added. Including the international target to the aggregate will allow shooters the opportunity to be exposed to a target that they would be expected to shoot at the Nationals in Friendship. We are hoping this will allow shooters to feel more prepared when they attend a National shoot.

What's Does the Future Hold?

Over a year ago a group of shooters approached me about eliminating the Territorial Championships from the Spring National Shoot at Friendship. In its place they proposed that the top three shooters in each aggregate from the top ten be awarded the plaques that would have been given in Friendship. They offered valid reasons for this change; which included that the territorial top ten drew from more shooters from around the country, that the scores shot at the territorials are higher than the scores shot in Friendship and if the territorial program was meant to represent the best shooters in the country that using the top ten scores was a better way of doing this. I have spent the last year informally asking competitors and match directors what their feelings are about this suggestion. I would like to open this discussion up to a greater number of people. This year each match director will be receiving surveys about this proposed change. This is a decision that will not be made lightly, but will be made in the best interest of all competitors of the territorial program. I look forward to hearing from territorial competitors about this issue.

Territorial Thank You

Hosting a territorial isn't easy. There is a lot of time and hard work in pulling one off successfully. Each year I ask the territorial match directors if there is anyone they wish to thank. These people help out in varying ways; from scoring targets to being range officers, from running the registration and target shack to making sure people are well fed. The NMLRA would like to thank all those people who help behind the scenes.

- Members of the Tygart Valley Muzzleloading Club of West Virginia
- The numerous helpers in California and Oregon
- Lydia Funneman, Leonard Sisil, and Ron and Shirley Nowlin of Illinois
- Kim Sullivan, Carol and Dennis Winburn, Bob Woford, Charlie Burton, Walt Rybca, Randy Henderson, and John and Jayne from Kentucky
- Herb & Wanda Nicholson, Tracey Pressley, and Alan Sykes of Georgia
- Mike Willard, Dick King, Bill Bowling, and Jordan Shackleford of North Carolina

I know there were many more. Thank you to all of the people who make this program successful!

Despite some horrible weather at many territorials, the 2015 territorial season was a success. Anytime one can get out and have a little friendly black powder competition it has to be deemed a success and good time had by all. I hope some of you will accept my challenge to come to your first territorial or bring a new shooter with you. I look forward to the 2016 NMLRA territorial season, I have a feeling it's going to be one of the best yet.

Field Reps Wanted!

The NMLRA is currently seeking volunteers to apply for Field Rep positions. Please call Joyce at 812-667-5131 ext. 221 for an application and list of duties and responsibilities.