

Wildlife Damage Management Program

Fiscal Year 2015



Photo Credit: Mitchell Daily Republic

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"Serving People, Managing Wildlife"

**South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks
523 East Capitol Avenue, Pierre, SD 57501**

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Fiscal Year 2015 (July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015)

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Introduction

Greetings! I'm excited to share many of our accomplishments from the past year. With more than eighty-percent of South Dakota in private ownership, Game, Fish and Parks works cooperatively with private landowners and producers to resolve many types of wildlife damage to maintain these important relationships. These private lands produce the majority of wildlife that reside in the state as well as provides the foundation for hunting opportunities that many South Dakotans and visitors enjoy every year. It is because of these important considerations that GFP operates such an active and comprehensive Wildlife Damage Management (WDM) program. Last year, GFP spent over \$2.35 million to operate the WDM programs in South Dakota and responded to over 2,600 requests which directly impacted nearly 2,000 landowners and producers.

In early 2015, Kelly Hepler began his tenure as the department Secretary. Secretary Hepler believes in the department's commitment to providing assistance to landowners and producers and continues to look for venues to expand and maximize resources to address wildlife conflicts. Cooperative partnerships are a critical component to the success of our programs and I'd be remised if I did not acknowledge the important partnerships that we have with landowners, producers, predator control districts, and other agencies. This report highlights the important services and the hard work that our dedicated professionals provide to landowners and producers throughout South Dakota. One important highlight I'm proud to share comes from a recent survey GFP administered to more than 1,500 different landowners and producers. Eighty-percent of landowners and producers that responded were satisfied with the services provided by GFP's predator control, beaver, and nuisance animal control programs.

As the agency responsible for managing the wildlife resources in South Dakota, GFP certainly manages with a science-based approach, although careful consideration is given to social tolerances and landowner concerns which play an integral role in wildlife management and the delivery of our program services. GFP remains committed to working with landowners and producers to manage wildlife and the impacts their populations can have to private property. I hope this summary gives you a better understanding of these valuable services.

Sincerely,



Keith Fisk
Wildlife Damage Program Administrator

History of Wildlife Damage Management in South Dakota

South Dakota has a very diverse landscape and land-use varies greatly across the state. This diversity as well as local wildlife populations, weather conditions, changes to local habitat, and social tolerances all help determine the services the WDM program offer. GFP operates a multi-faceted WDM program which is designed to address human-wildlife conflicts involving most species of wildlife that occur throughout South Dakota. Currently, 27 wildlife damage specialists, numerous seasonal staff, and many other GFP staff provide the “boots-on-the-ground” delivery of the WDM program services. Wildlife damage staff work directly with South Dakota’s livestock and agricultural producers to alleviate or reduce livestock loss from predators (primarily coyote) as well as crop, tree, and road damage caused from beaver. They help to minimize or alleviate damage to stored-feed supplies caused by deer, elk, and turkey, and work to reduce damage to growing crops from Canada geese, elk, and pronghorn. In addition, GFP also provides prairie dog control on private lands that have been encroached from adjacent public land. However, these programs haven’t always functioned under the current operational guidelines.



Initially, GFP operated only the Animal Damage Control (ADC) program which was mandated by state law in 1939. This program was then more formalized in 1974 by the South Dakota Legislature. The passage of this legislation established the program and funding which allowed GFP to employ personnel to control coyotes, fox, prairie dogs, and other wild animals injurious to landowners. This legislation developed a system to fund the program wherein state law provided for an assessment to each county based upon livestock numbers (i.e. cattle and sheep) located within the county. While the assessment amount is generated using the numbers of livestock, all tax-payers within a county contribute. This law also mandated that GFP match those county monies on a 1:1 basis initially, and beginning in 1999 the GFP match increased to a 2:1 rate. The county assessments generate approximately \$300,000 and coupled with the GFP match of 2:1, another \$600,000 is added. Then during the legislative session of 2013, the South Dakota Legislature enacted legislation that added an additional one-dollar



surcharge to most hunting licenses. This one-dollar surcharge adds approximately another \$300,000 for ADC program funding. Finally, the S.D. Department of Agriculture provides some additional funding to the ADC program each year to assist with prairie dog control work. Initially, GFP employed a number of "Extension Trappers", who were responsible for specific work districts and responded to requests for service from South Dakota's landowners and producers. Over the years, GFP also operated an aerial hunting program to control coyotes and fox in local areas during this time period. Most requests for assistance involved problems with coyotes, fox, beaver, raccoon, and prairie dogs. Since 2000, GFP has expended more than \$19 million on ADC program services in South Dakota.

As the populations of other wildlife species (i.e. deer, elk, turkey, and Canada geese) increased, they began to impact more South Dakota landowners and producers. The South



Dakota Legislature adopted legislation in 1999 which attached a five-dollar surcharge to most hunting licenses in South Dakota to provide additional funding to help landowners and producers. One-half of the monies raised from this surcharge go towards hunter access programs and the other one-half is used to support the WDM program. This surcharge generates

approximately \$1.7 million annually, again split 50:50 between WDM and hunter access. It has also been GFP's position to utilize the proceeds from Special Buck licenses to help fund WDM program services, which generates an additional \$400,000 each year. Combined, the WDM portion of the program receives approximately \$1.3 million annually in funding support. These funds are used to alleviate or reduce impacts to agricultural and livestock producers as a direct result from wildlife depredation. In 2001, four wildlife damage specialists (one within each administrative region) were hired to help implement the initial program services. In addition, assistance is also provided by wildlife conservation officers across the state when needed.



As a condition to receive assistance, landowners and producers are asked to sign an agreement with GFP that states they do not charge for hunting access (for the species they are requesting assistance with) and they agree to allow reasonable free hunting access to people that obtain proper permission.

In 2009, these two programs (i.e. ADC and WDM) were formally consolidated and the comprehensive WDM program that GFP operates today was created. At the same time, GFP also entered into a cooperative agreement with USDA-Wildlife Services (USDA-WS) in regards to predator control in South Dakota. Currently, USDA-WS is responsible for most aerial predator control operations while GFP provides predator control services via ground-control methods. Additionally, GFP provides a limited number of hours of aerial predator control in certain areas where logistics make it difficult for timely responses.



Under the consolidated program, extension trappers were reclassified as wildlife damage specialists and are now responsible for providing assistance to producers with all types of requests for service within their respective work district. Dependent upon their location and demand from producers, some wildlife damage specialists work primarily with deer and Canada geese while others work primarily on predator control. Obviously, weather and local wildlife populations dictate the amount and types of services that wildlife damage staff provides.

As the demand for program services has increased GFP has been responsive in assuring that maximum services are provided to our producers and landowners in South Dakota, within the limits of available funding. As an example, for many years GFP provided only very limited

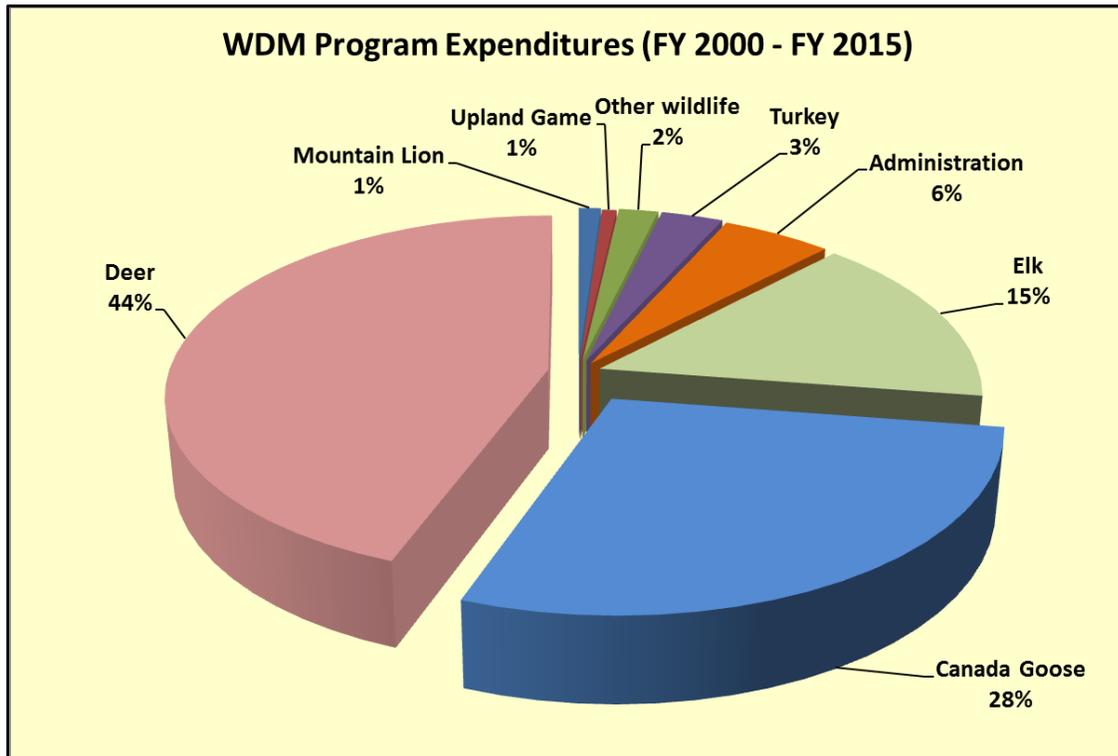


services in regards to Canada goose depredation assistance. However, as the resident Canada goose population increased in eastern South Dakota as well as the demand from producers and landowners, GFP's services increased accordingly. For example, in fiscal year 2002 GFP spent \$243,857 on Canada goose depredation assistance and in fiscal year 2012, GFP spent \$717,262. Again, demonstrating that as the demand for services

increased, so did GFP's efforts to reduce or alleviate the corresponding crop damage.

Since 2000, GFP has spent more than \$19.5 million on resolving game species depredation (primarily deer, elk, and Canada geese) on private land. As we move forward and follow GFP's mission motto, "*Serving People, Managing Wildlife*" the WDM program will

continue to adapt services and programs to best meet the demands from our partners in wildlife management, South Dakota's landowners and producers.



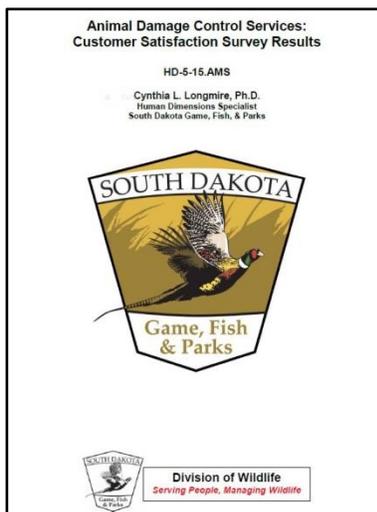
New for 2015

New in 2015, GFP initiated several enhanced programs for landowners that experience elk depredation. These enhanced services were a direct result of legislation that was passed during the 2014 legislation session. The South Dakota Legislature approved a five-dollar increase (not to exceed ten-dollars total) to the non-refundable application fee for elk, bighorn sheep, and mountain goat and were earmarked for elk depredation programs that assist private landowners. These increased fees were first collected in 2015 and implemented this past year. By providing several enhanced programs to cooperating landowners GFP anticipates increasing the social tolerance levels needed for managing elk numbers adopted within the Elk Management Plan.

Also new in 2015, at the request of the legislatively established ADC Policy Advisory Committee, GFP conducted a survey of landowners and producers that received Animal Damage Control (ADC) program services over the past two years. The survey was sent to over 1,500 landowners and producers and valuable information was obtained. A few highlights from the survey are below:

- 1.) 80% of respondents were satisfied with the services they received.
- 2.) 70% of respondents requested service for assistance with coyotes.
- 3.) 63% of comments provided suggestions for improvement.
 - a. 57% were related to coyotes
 - b. 27% were related to staffing levels

The information obtained from this survey assists GFP's decision-making process regarding operational components of the ADC program and the services we provide. As a result



of the information collected from this survey and input from other stakeholders, GFP has allocated additional funds to operate a second aircraft for increased aerial predator control services in eastern and central South Dakota. GFP has also provided greater flexibility with workloads of our wildlife damage staff to better meet the demand for ADC program services. These two changes will result in enhanced predator control efforts as well as more effective and efficient responses to landowner/producer demands. These enhancements will provide livestock producers with more proactive predator control efforts rather than reactive.

If you are interested in the complete survey, you can access it at the following location:

<http://gfp.sd.gov/hunting/docs/ADC%20Satisfaction%20Survey%20Report.pdf>

Wildlife Damage Management Program Goals

When someone thinks of a Wildlife Damage Specialist (WDS), several thoughts may come to mind. Those thoughts may consist of a GFP staff member assisting with trapping a coyote that has killed livestock, assisting with the construction of electric fence to protect growing crops from Canada goose damage, or assistance regarding deer damage to stored-feed supplies. While these answers are all correct, wildlife damage specialists play a very important role within GFP and provide the people of South Dakota with many valuable services.

Primary Purpose

With more than 80 percent of South Dakota in private ownership, private landowners play a pivotal role in wildlife management. Wildlife damage specialists cooperatively work with



landowners and producers to alleviate or reduce all types of wildlife damage to private property. This includes alleviating livestock loss caused by coyotes and fox, reducing damage to stored-feed supplies from deer, elk, and turkeys, reducing damage to growing crops from Canada geese, alleviating livestock loss and protecting the general public from mountain lions, reducing damage to commercial watermelon growers from raccoons and deer, controlling prairie dogs on lands adjacent to public land, and reducing damage to crops, dams,

trees, roads and other property from beaver. They assist landowners with a diversity of other human-wildlife conflicts such as pronghorn antelope and pheasant depredation as well as hawk and owl control to protect poultry. There are also certain situations where wildlife damage staff assists with public safety such as, the protection of levees and dikes from wildlife (during the flooding events in 2011), wildlife threats on or near airports, human-wildlife conflicts with



aggressive wildlife species and other situations that arise. Some staff members also train and supervise a large number of seasonal employees and interns which provide the primary workforce for many wildlife damage management activities. Wildlife damage specialists also interact with a significant number of landowners and producers each year and GFP relies on these staff members for agency communications with the citizens of South Dakota at the grass-roots level.

Wildlife Damage Specialist of the Year Award:

Each year, one wildlife damage specialist is selected for this award from peers and supervisors. This year, Daren Hetland (second from the right) was selected for his dedication and



outstanding performance in southeastern South Dakota (Region 3). GFP also received a letter from one of Daren’s producers that said “My experiences with your predator control services and particularly Daren Hetland has always been the very best. Don’t let him get away!” It is comments like these from producers that exemplify the important work Daren completes for GFP and the producers we serve. Daren has worked for GFP for 26 years and has created many valuable relationships with the producers he

works with. He consistently displays a strong commitment to his duties and loyalty to GFP, landowners and producers, and sportsmen through persistence, hard work, efficiency, professionalism, and a positive attitude. Congratulations to Daren!

Wildlife Management

Wildlife damage specialists assist with many different wildlife surveys and disease monitoring efforts that GFP conducts throughout the year. They assist with surveys such as deer counts, fawn captures, pheasant brood routes, pronghorn antelope surveys, elk surveys, grouse surveys and turkey counts. They help with duck and goose banding, bobcat tagging, and walleye spawning when time allows. They are also called upon to work with other GFP staff on disease monitoring efforts such as Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD),



Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD), and Avian Influenza. They assist with wildlife research projects when projects demand certain skills or personnel and play a vital role in the success of many projects. Wildlife damage specialists also provide input on recommendations for the many different seasons and licenses that South Dakota offers.

Public Outreach and Education

Another important role that wildlife damage specialists play is to provide educational seminars and demonstrations to sportsmen groups, schools, and other interested groups to



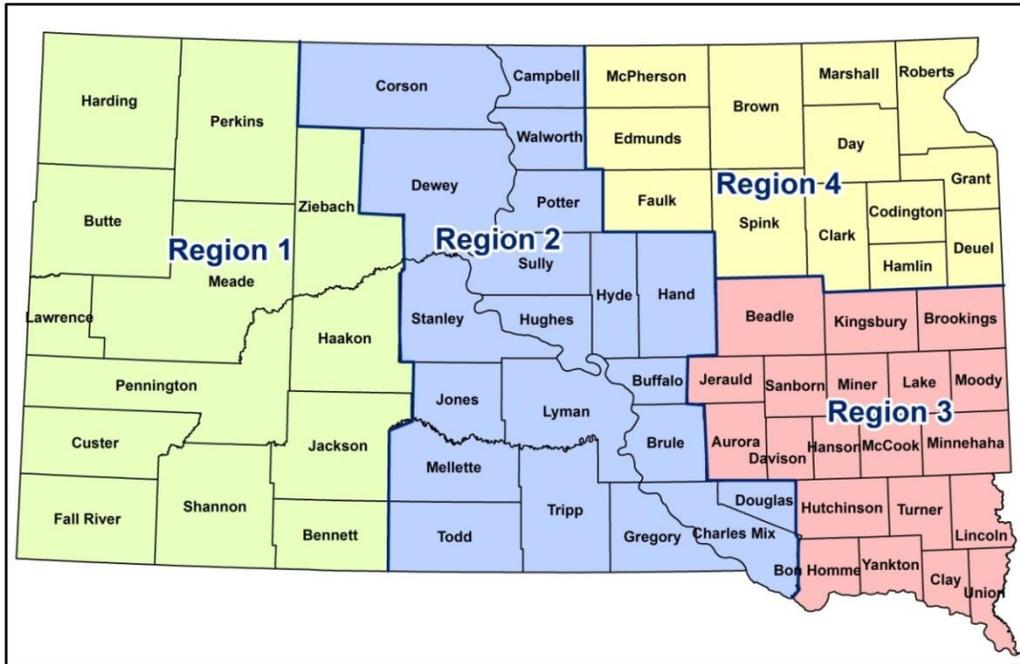
promote the sport hunting and trapping of furbearers. Wildlife damage staff participates in events throughout South Dakota such as the Step-Outside Program and other GFP-sponsored public outreach events. Wildlife damage specialists present information regarding the WDM program to county commissions, predator control districts, and appear at numerous other public meetings throughout the year.

Administrators routinely interact with stakeholder groups such as the WDM Working Group, ADC Policy Advisory Committee, SD Stockgrowers, SD Sheepgrowers, SD Cattlemen, SD Ag Unity, GFP Commission, and many other organizations, policy-makers, and groups. They also coordinate management activities and operations with other partners such as USDA-WS, USDA Forest Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, and other state and federal agencies as well as cooperate on wildlife damage research with South Dakota State University and USDA National Wildlife Research Center.

Program accountability is an important element for GFP and it's critical that our constituents' needs are being met by our programs and services as well as providing accountability to the sportsmen and women that provide funding for these important programs. Over the past five years, GFP has made a considerable effort to demonstrate accountability and transparency through enhanced public communication efforts.

Division of Wildlife - Administrative Regions

The Division of Wildlife’s Operations Section is divided into four administrative regions. Each region works under the supervision of a regional supervisor along with other assistant supervisory staff. Each region then has assorted field-staff which conduct the “on-the-ground” work and services to the citizens of South Dakota. In addition to the four administrative regions, the Division of Wildlife also has an administrative section which consists of a program administrator and support staff.



Region 1 (Western): Bennett, Butte, Custer, Fall River, Haakon, Harding, Jackson, Lawrence, Meade, Pennington, Perkins, Shannon, and Ziebach.

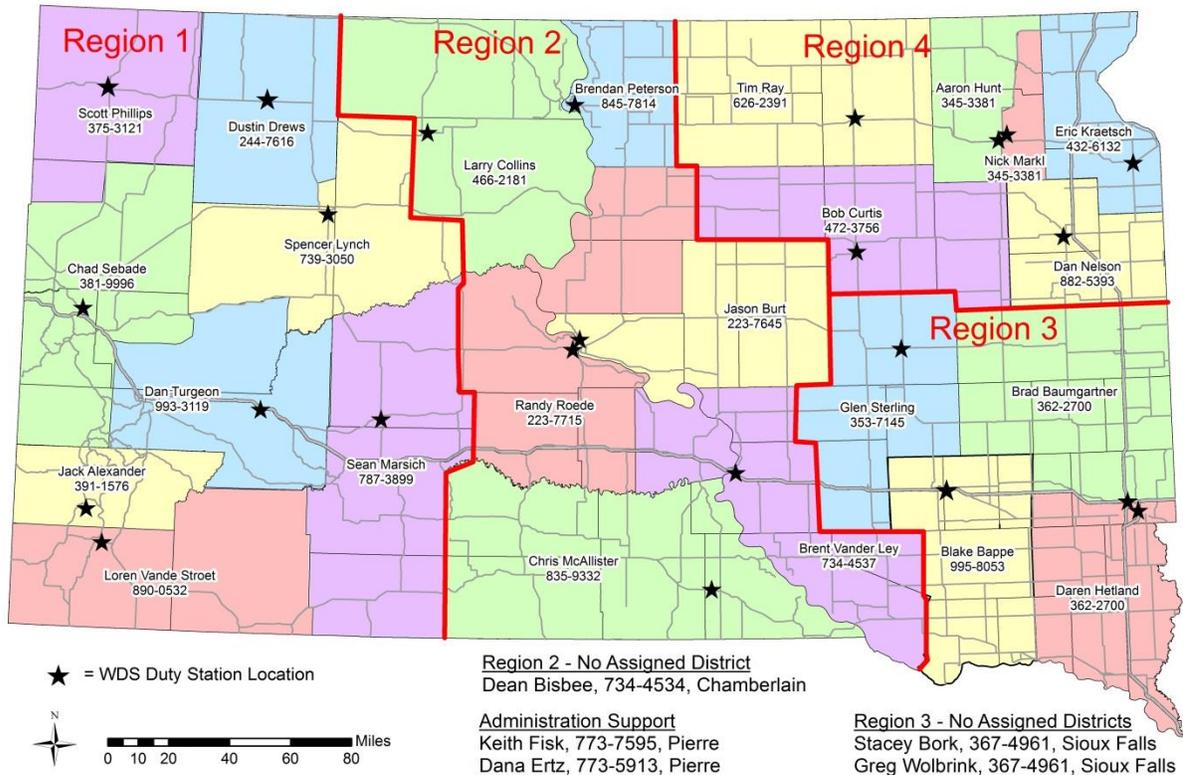
Region 2 (Central): Brule, Buffalo, Campbell, Charles Mix, Corson, Dewey, Douglas, Gregory, Hand, Hughes, Hyde, Jones, Lyman, Mellette, Potter, Stanley, Sully, Todd, Tripp, and Walworth.

Region 3 (Southeast): Aurora, Beadle, Bon Homme, Brookings, Clay, Davison, Hanson, Hutchinson, Jerald, Kingsbury, Lake, Lincoln, McCook, Miner, Minnehaha, Moody, Sanborn, Turner, Union, and Yankton.

Region 4 (Northeast): Brown, Clark, Codington, Day, Deuel, Edmunds, Faulk, Grant, Hamlin, Marshall, McPherson, Roberts, and Spink.

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| <p><u>South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Administrative Staff</u> Kelly Hepler, Department Secretary Tony Leif, Wildlife Division Director Tom Kirschenmann, Wildlife Division Deputy Director Mike Kintigh, Regional Supervisor – Region 1 (West) Cliff Stone, Regional Supervisor – Region 2 (Central) Emmett Keyser, Regional Supervisor – Region 3 (Southeast) Scott Lindgren, Regional Supervisor – Region 4 (Northeast)</p> |
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South Dakota GFP Wildlife Damage Management Program



Statewide – Program Report and Summary

The state of South Dakota consists of 66 counties and has a tremendously diverse landscape from east to west as well as from north to south. This diverse landscape includes croplands, grasslands, wetlands and lakes, rugged river drainages, badlands, and the Black Hills. These varying landscapes also present their own unique set of challenges due to the wildlife species that are present, weather conditions, and social tolerance levels.

South Dakota has an abundance of wildlife species and includes populations of white-tailed deer, mule deer, upland game, waterfowl, pronghorn antelope, elk, furbearers, turkeys, and mountain lions. Twenty-seven full-time wildlife damage specialists, numerous seasonal positions, and assisting GFP staff provide the “boots-on-the-ground” delivery of the important WDM programs. These programs provide direct assistance to South Dakota producers and landowners with most wildlife species. The depredation assistance that GFP primarily provides includes assistance with beaver, Canada geese, coyote, deer, elk, fox, mountain lions, nuisance animals, pheasant, pronghorn antelope, turkey, as well as other wildlife species.



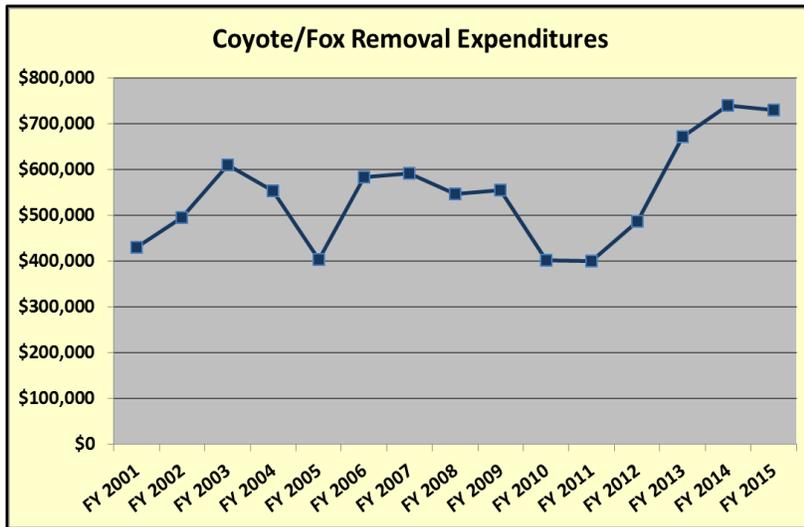
Working with livestock producers to resolve predator impacts to their operations is the largest component of the ADC portion of GFP’s WDM program. High coyote populations as well as favorable livestock prices had wildlife damage staff very busy responding to requests for assistance with predators. Staff worked with 908 livestock producers to reduce or alleviate livestock losses



caused from predators. As a result, staff responded to 1,346 requests for assistance with livestock loss or the protection of livestock and removed a total of 7,623 coyotes and 348 fox in cooperation with USDA-WS. Statewide, the number of requests for service was up 11% from the previous



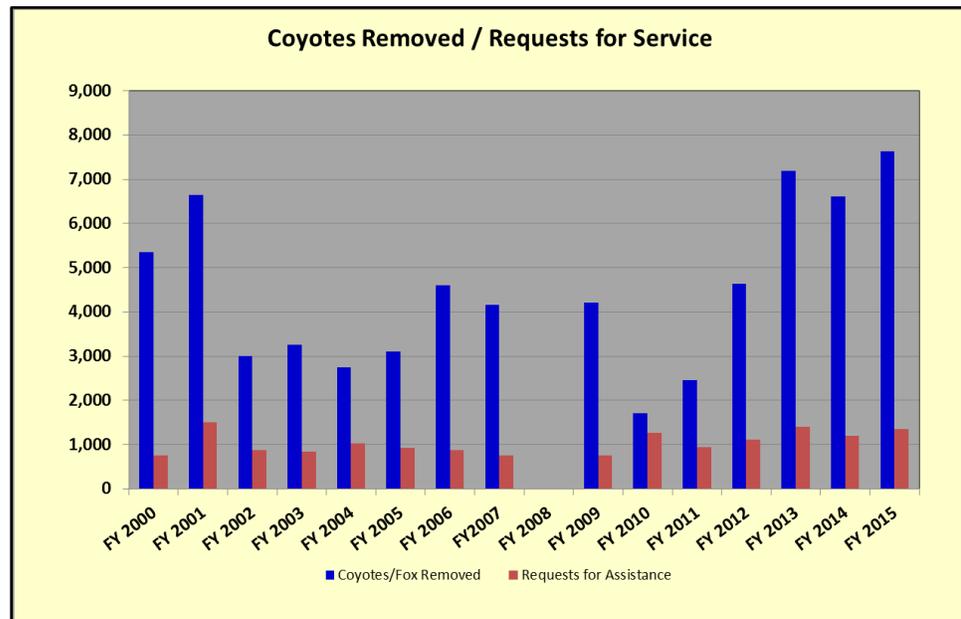
year. Wildlife damage staff worked nearly 17,000 hours and drove almost 300,000 miles to address these concerns. GFP also provided 200 hours of additional aerial predator control (above the 700 hours that USDA-WS provides to South Dakota) focused in eastern South



Dakota. In addition, GFP provided a total of \$12,000 of cooperative funding to six predator control districts (Campbell County, Edmunds County, Faulk County, McPherson County, Multi-County (Harding, Butte, and portions of Lawrence and Meade counties), and Perkins County) for additional aerial predator control. These funds provided another 100 hours of aerial predator control above

the level which predator control districts normally allocate, which were directed by local GFP wildlife damage staff. Total program expenditures for predator control in South Dakota were \$730,690. Since 2001, GFP has spent more than \$7.7 million on predator control to address livestock loss events and the protection of livestock. In 2015, cooperatively working with USDA-WS and local predator control districts, GFP removed the highest number of coyotes in the past 15 years.

Moving forward in 2016, GFP anticipates even more coyotes being removed as GFP enhances its predator control efforts across



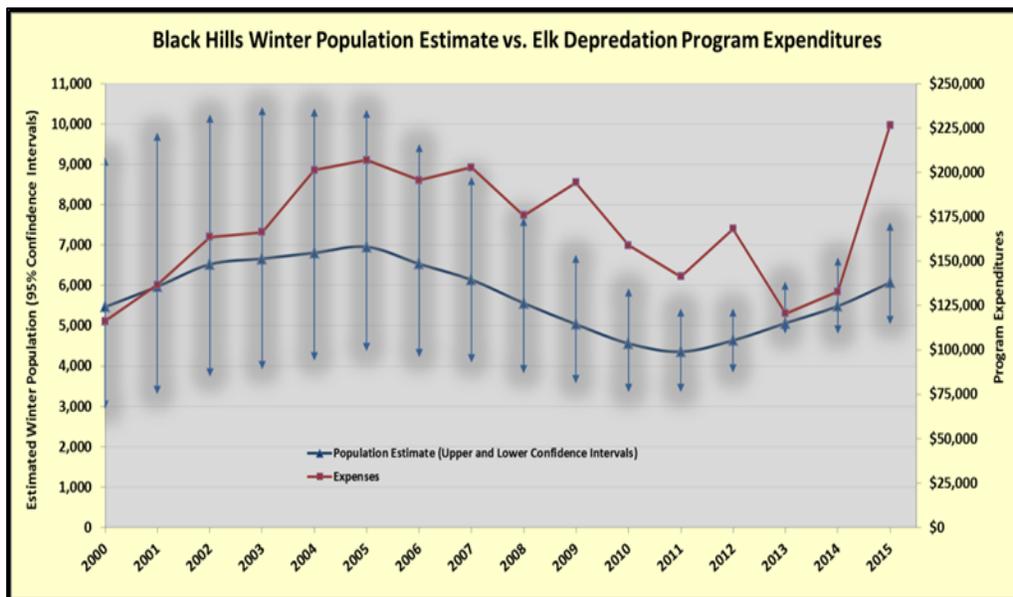
South Dakota and field reports indicate very high coyote populations. GFP has committed funding to operate a full-time plane and pilot located in Huron which will provide additional aerial predator control services to livestock producers in eastern and central South Dakota. By utilizing a second aircraft based in Huron, GFP can respond more effectively to livestock loss events. These efforts will also improve response effectiveness in western South Dakota because the aircraft located in Spearfish will not have to divide time between conflicts in

western South Dakota and eastern South Dakota. Moving forward, each aircraft can focus its time on the needs of livestock producers exclusively in eastern and western South Dakota.

Local wildlife populations and weather play a very important role in the demands of the WDM program. At the same time, social tolerance to wildlife on the landscape also plays a critical role in wildlife management. Wildlife damage staff responded to 66 requests for service regarding elk damage, primarily in and around the Black Hills area. Staff drove more than 9,100 miles and worked over 790 hours to address these landowner concerns. Many of these requests were addressed by utilizing food plot contracts. There were 42 food plot contracts initiated in 2015 primarily to reduce elk depredation to growing alfalfa and other crops.



Additionally, there were seven elk access contracts initiated, where elk hunting access on over 25,000 acres of private property was provided for hunters as well as assistance to landowners which are experiencing elk depredation. Overall, GFP spent a total of more than \$226,000 for elk depredation assistance, statewide. Since 2000, GFP has spent more than \$2.5 million working cooperatively with private landowners to address elk depredation. As GFP manages for higher elk populations in most hunting units in the Black Hills, GFP understands that there



will likely be increased requests for assistance due to the higher number of elk. The 2014 South Dakota Legislature approved a five-dollar increase (not to exceed

\$10 total) to the non-refundable application fee for elk applicants which is projected to raise an estimated \$160,000 which has been earmarked specifically for elk depredation assistance to private landowners. In 2015, GFP initiated several enhanced programs regarding elk

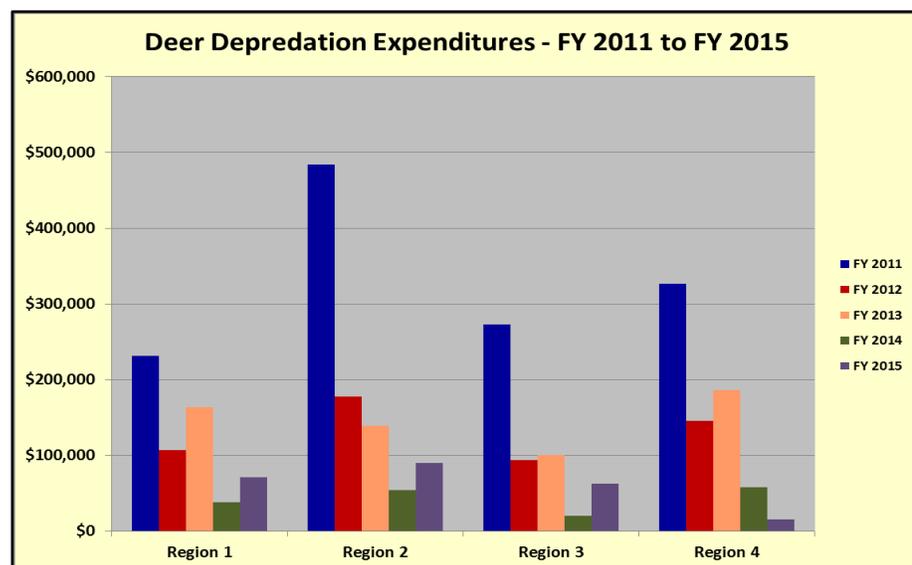
depredation which are designed to better meet the needs and demands for assistance with landowners that experience depredation impacts from elk. While many of the current abatement practices have proven successful over the past 20 years, elk depredation and the associated conflicts will continue to challenge GFP. These matters are complex and not only involve the management of elk but also include social, economic, and political dynamics as well. However, GFP has a proven history of working with private landowners and is committed to cooperatively working with private landowners to implement reasonable solutions to address future elk depredation conflicts.

Local deer populations and weather events greatly affects the demands for deer damage abatement services. The winter weather of 2015 was near normal, deep snow was

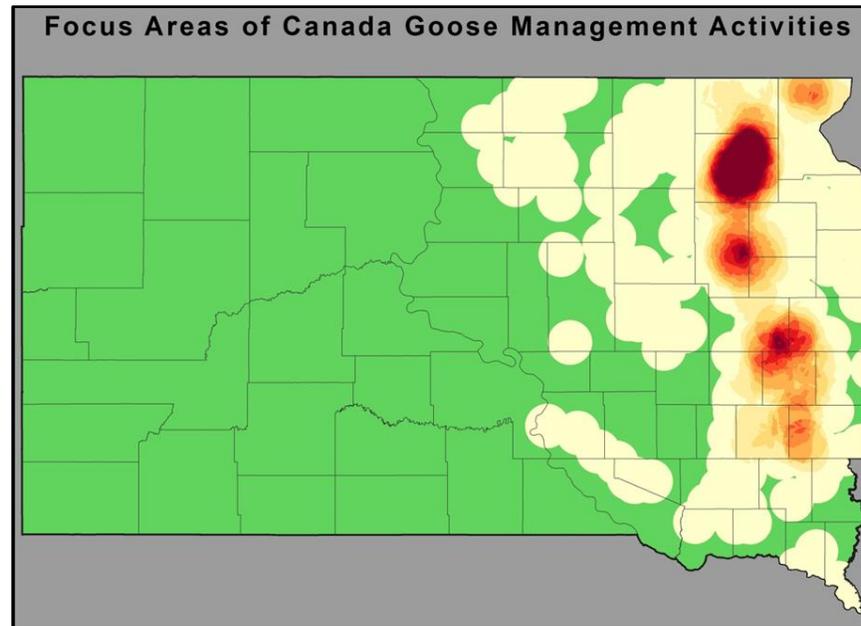


never experienced in most areas of South Dakota and temperatures weren't extreme. Additionally, many areas of South Dakota were at or below the management objectives regarding the deer population. Low population levels coupled with minimal deep snow, and over \$6.8 million expended in previous deer abatement efforts (the year 2000 through 2015) resulted in the second lightest workload since the program's inception in 1998. GFP has spent

considerable resources over the past 15 years providing long-term solutions (protective stackyards which protect hay and stored-feed supplies) to address deer damage. Wildlife damage staff still responded to 59 requests for service, statewide, to address concentrations of deer damaging stored-feed supplies. By working cooperatively with the 67 impacted landowners, wildlife damage staff was able to resolve or minimize these conflicts. Wildlife damage staff also initiated ten stackyard contracts to protect stored-feed supplies and five protective fencing projects to alleviate damage to commercial orchards, nurseries, and gardens. Staff drove more than 19,000 miles and worked more than 1,500 hours to address these concerns. Overall, the total program expenditures for deer depredation assistance were \$238,433.



The spring weather experienced during 2015 was near normal. With an estimated resident Canada goose spring population index of approximately 155,000 GFP responded to 607 requests for assistance. The total number of requests for assistance was down 40% compared to the record levels experienced in 2012. Regardless, when this large number of birds is

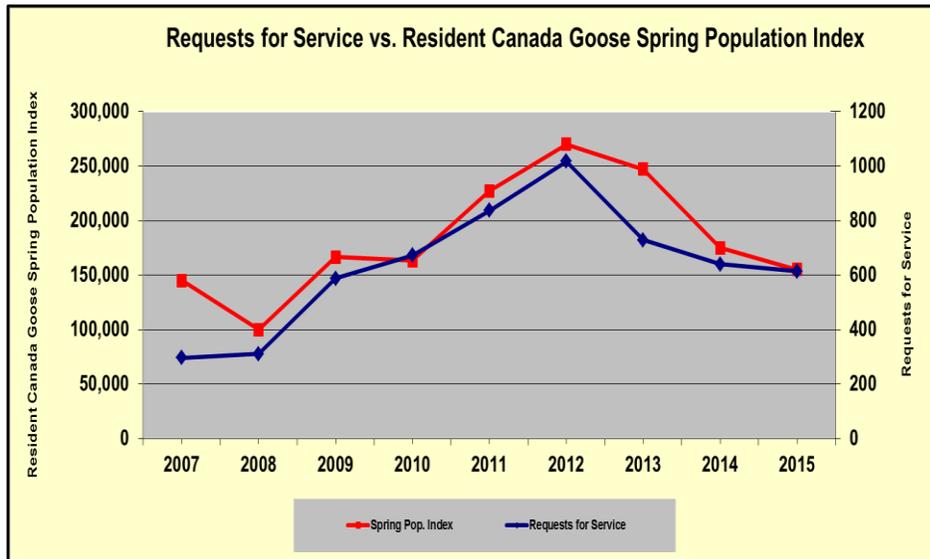


combined with the agriculture/wetland matrix that occurs in eastern South Dakota and higher commodity prices, many producers requested GFP's services. All requests for assistance involved damage to growing-season crops (primarily soybeans). GFP staff worked with 449 landowners to provide crop protection from Canada goose damage. Three hundred and fifty private landowners worked cooperatively with GFP to

haze and remove Canada geese from areas where crop damage was occurring. These actions were authorized by GFP through their USFWS Special Canada Goose Permit. These permitted landowners took a total of 1,114 Canada geese during this cooperative effort. While the number of birds removed by permitted landowners does not have an impact on the overall population, this management tool is critical to engage landowners and assist GFP with hazing efforts. Staff drove a total of more than 63,000 miles and worked more than 9,400 hours to respond to these concerns. Wildlife damage staff also added 1,055 Canada goose nests which greatly reduced crop damage in several localized areas as well as reduced staff time and effort. GFP also initiated 46 buffer-strip and food plot contracts which are designed to minimize goose damage to cropfields located near edges of wetlands. Overall, the total program expenditures for Canada goose depredation assistance was \$378,405. Since 2000, GFP has spent more than \$5 million cooperatively working with private landowners to address Canada goose damage to growing crops.



There was a substantial decrease in the workload and associated expenditures when compared to 2014 as well as the record year which occurred in 2012. There is a strong linkage between the resident Canada goose population and the level of Canada goose damage



abatement services that GFP provides to landowners. This relationship clearly demonstrates that when higher than desired Canada goose numbers occur on the landscape a larger number of producers are impacted. By working together with sportsmen and women and

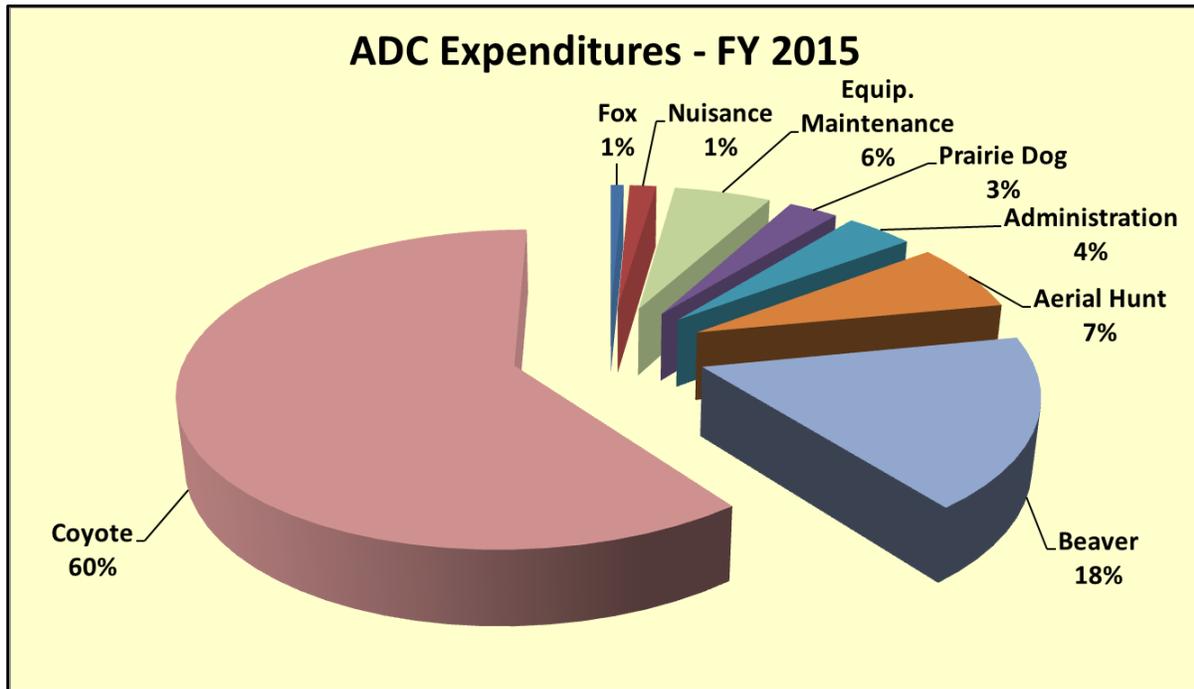
liberalizing hunting seasons and bag limits as well as help from Mother Nature, the resident Canada goose population appears to be decreasing. Moving forward, GFP has assembled a stakeholder group and is currently discussing Canada goose management and working on revising the current management plan. It is anticipated that this revision will be finalized in 2016.

Requests from producers and landowners with beaver damage were up 33% compared to last year. Wildlife damage staff responded to 431 requests for assistance with beaver damage where they removed a total of 1,190 beaver across South Dakota. Most of this work occurred in the eastern one-third of South Dakota where many riparian areas exist as well as lakes and other wetlands. Most types of damage consisted of the flooding of crops, damage to trees used as wind-breaks for over-wintering livestock, ornamental trees near homes, and damage to roads and livestock dams. Staff assisted 356 different landowners with beaver damage concerns. They drove nearly 93,000 miles and worked more than 4,800 hours to handle these problems throughout South Dakota. Total program expenditures were \$188,312.



Wildlife damage staff also responded to 101 requests for assistance with nuisance species such as raccoons, badger, skunk, and mink. Most requests were handled with technical advice or loaner-traps. However, staff did provide direct control in some situations. GFP staff

drove over 4,200 miles and worked more than 300 hours to address these complaints. Additionally, wildlife damage staff and GFP contractors controlled over 3,000 acres of prairie dogs that had encroached private land from adjacent public land with a total program expenditure of nearly \$60,000. Overall, the ADC portion of the WDM program had a total expenditure of \$1,105,226 statewide. Wildlife damage staff drove more than 413,000 miles and worked more than 25,000 hours to address these 1,884 requests for assistance, which directly impacted 1,364 producers and landowners.



Wildlife damage staff responded to 15 requests for assistance involving turkey issues across South Dakota. Turkey numbers throughout South Dakota are at or below management objectives in most areas and as such, the demand for turkey depredation services was minimal. GFP staff drove over 12,000 miles and worked more than 800 hours to address these concerns. Statewide, program expenditures for staff time, mileage, materials and equipment totaled more than \$39,000. Wildlife damage staff also responded to many other requests for assistance involving other wildlife species. Additionally, wildlife damage staff responded to 46



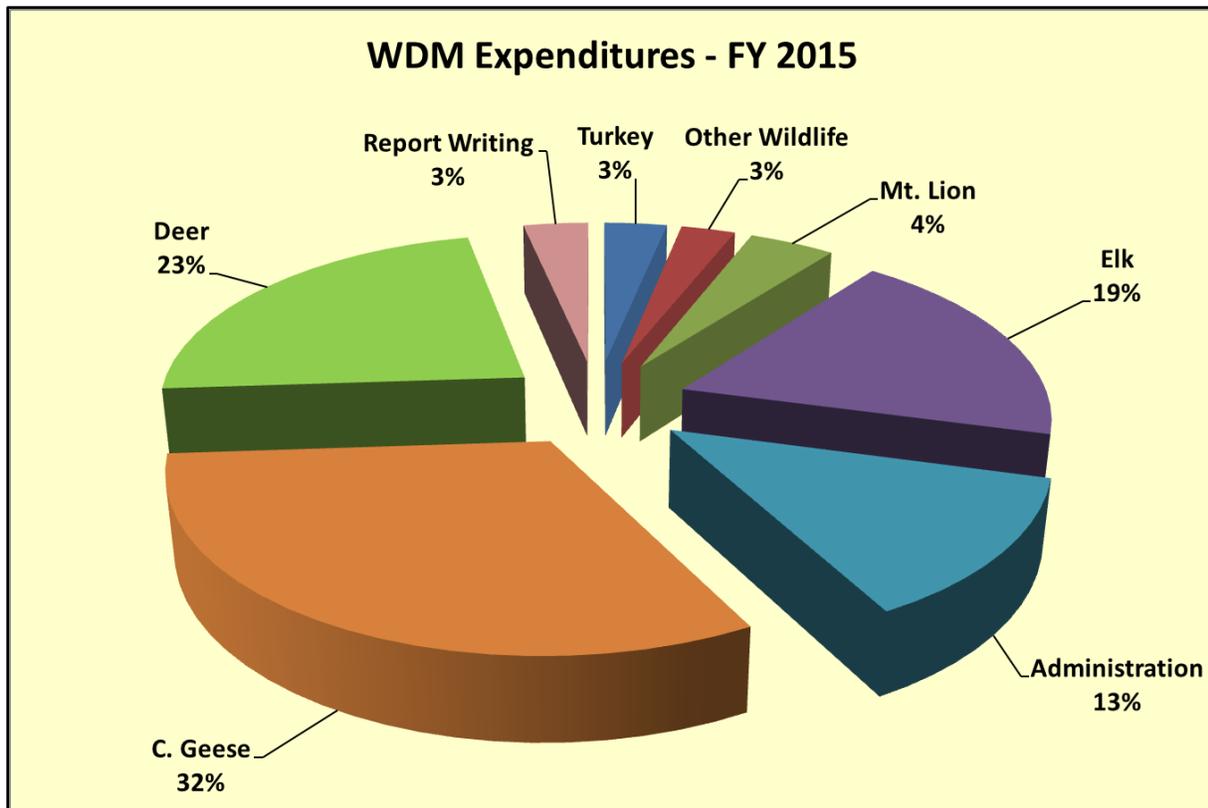
reports of livestock loss as well as public safety threats due to mountain lions. Wildlife damage staff drove more than 9,000 miles and worked nearly 1,000 hours to address these concerns. The statewide total program expenditure for mountain lion control was more than \$53,000.

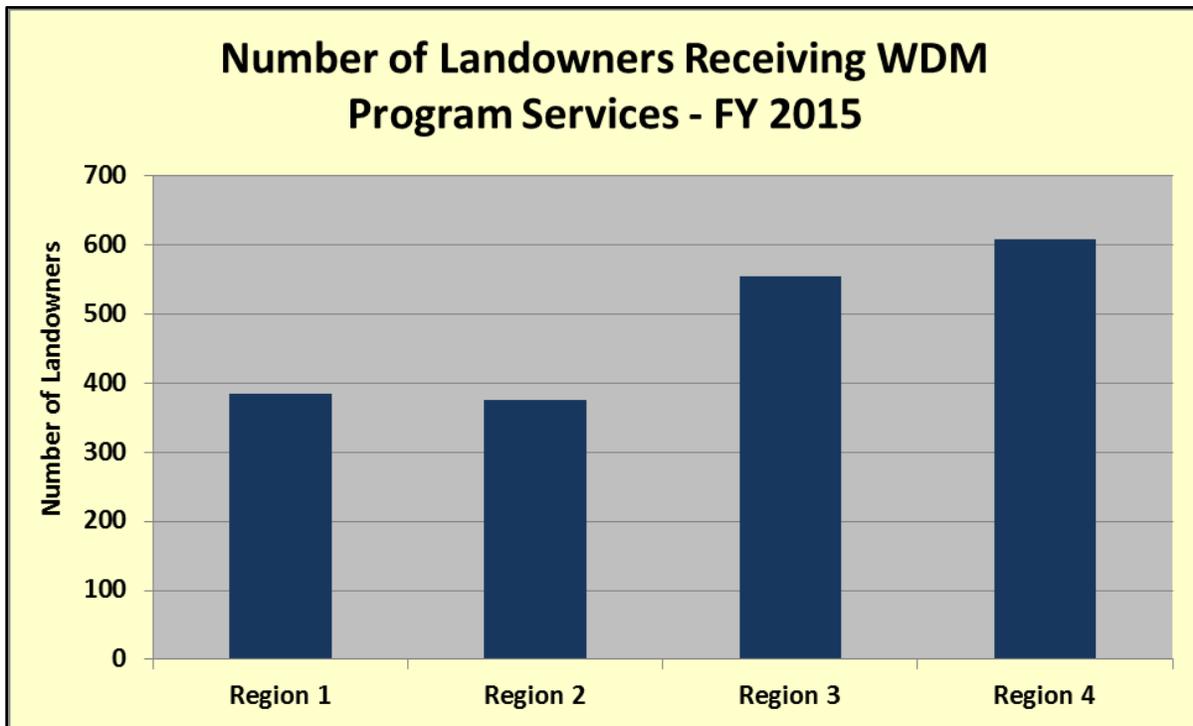
GFP has also worked cooperatively with South Dakota State University (SDSU) to evaluate several management tools to address wildlife damage. The most recent research project which is currently underway is an evaluation of a chemical deterrent that when applied to growing soybeans could potentially limit Canada goose damage. Initial results are positive and GFP will continue to work cooperatively with SDSU and the USDA-National Wildlife Research Center to further refine and develop enhanced application practices.



Partnerships are an extremely important component of the WDM program and are critical to the program's success. Each year, GFP's wildlife damage staff works cooperatively with landowners and producers to reduce or alleviate human-wildlife conflicts. Partnerships also exist with other state and federal agencies and all play an important role in the work that we accomplish.

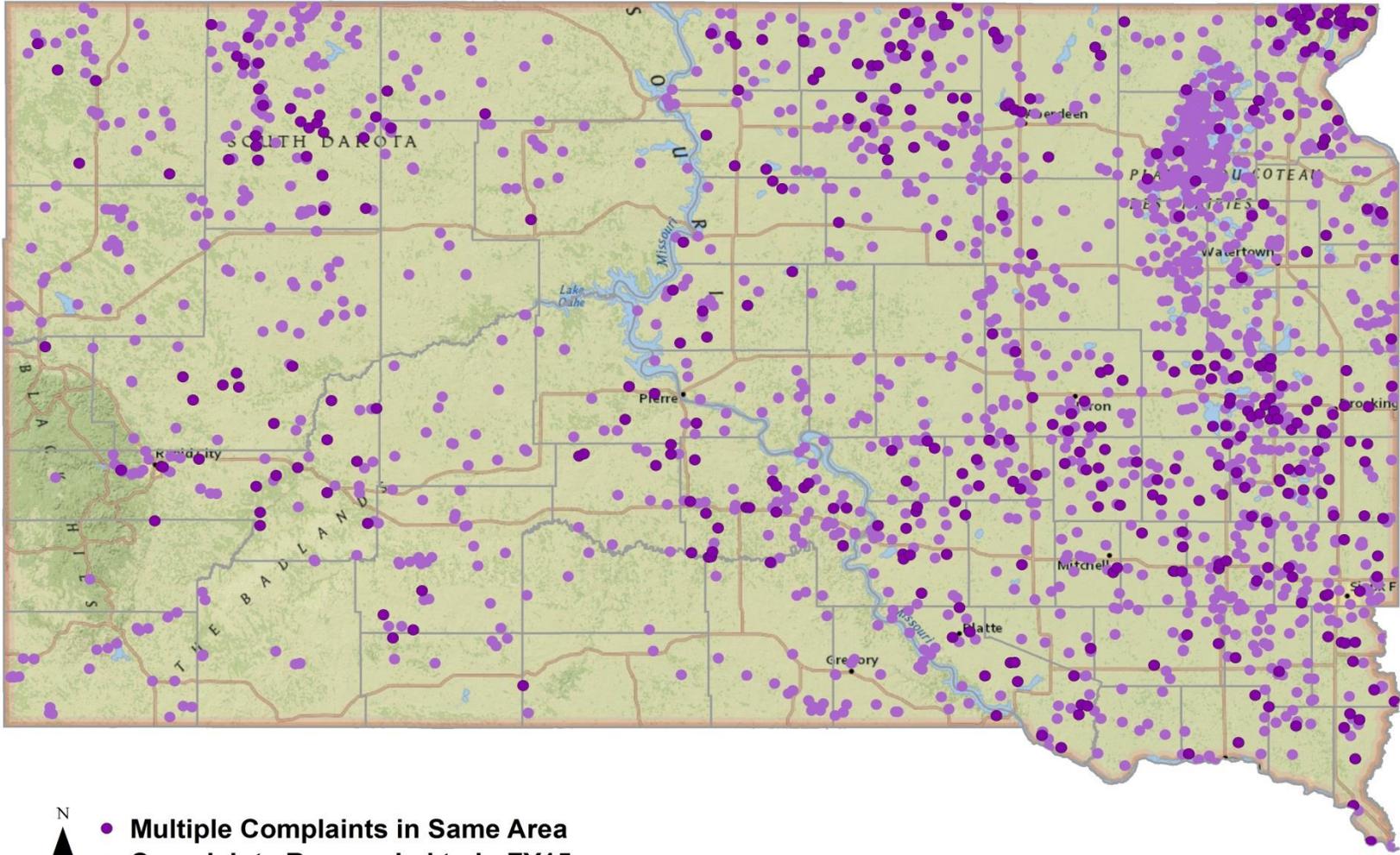
Overall, the statewide WDM portion of the program had a total expenditure of \$1,251,592. GFP staff worked more nearly 21,000 hours to address these 784 requests for assistance, which directly impacted 596 producers and landowners.



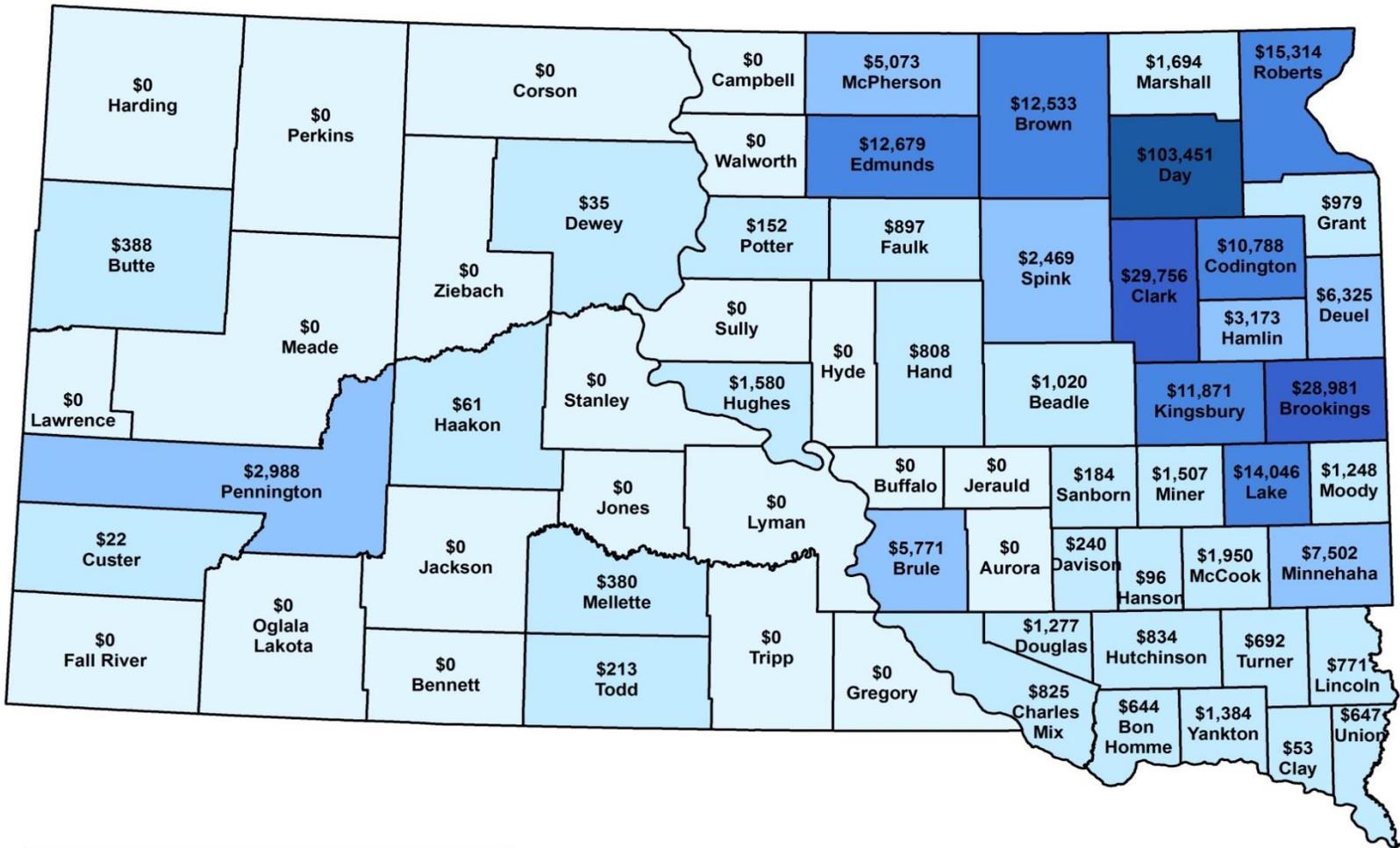


In summary, GFP responded to a total of 2,632 requests for assistance within the entire WDM program (i.e. ADC and WDM combined) during fiscal year 2015, which directly impacted 1,921 landowners and producers in South Dakota. The total program expenditures including staff time, mileage, equipment and materials totaled \$2,357,751.

Statewide Wildlife Damage Management Activities – FY 2015



FY 2015 - Canada Goose Depredation Expenditures



Statewide Expenditures = \$378,405

Region 1 – Program Report

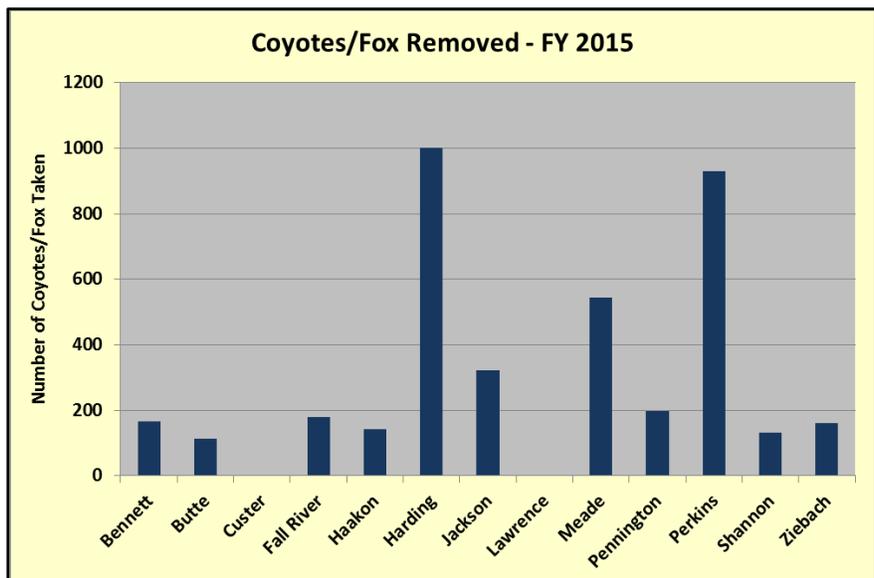
Region 1 encompasses the western one-third of South Dakota. The landscape is very diverse and consists of large expansive rolling grasslands with buttes, the Black Hills national forest, rugged river drainages, badlands, as well as some croplands. Wildlife species are abundant



and include most big game species, furbearers, upland game species, as well as, waterfowl. The region consists of 13 counties and has eight field positions (wildlife damage specialists) and one supervisory position. Region 1 is unique that wildlife conservation officers assist with the delivery of some of the WDM programs and services such as elk and deer depredation assistance. With a large percentage of South Dakota’s sheep producers occurring within this region, the primary job duties for most field

staff revolve around the protection of livestock from predators but also include beaver control and under certain weather conditions assistance with deer, elk, and turkey depredation. GFP also works with several private contractors to control prairie dogs on private lands that have been encroached from adjacent public lands.

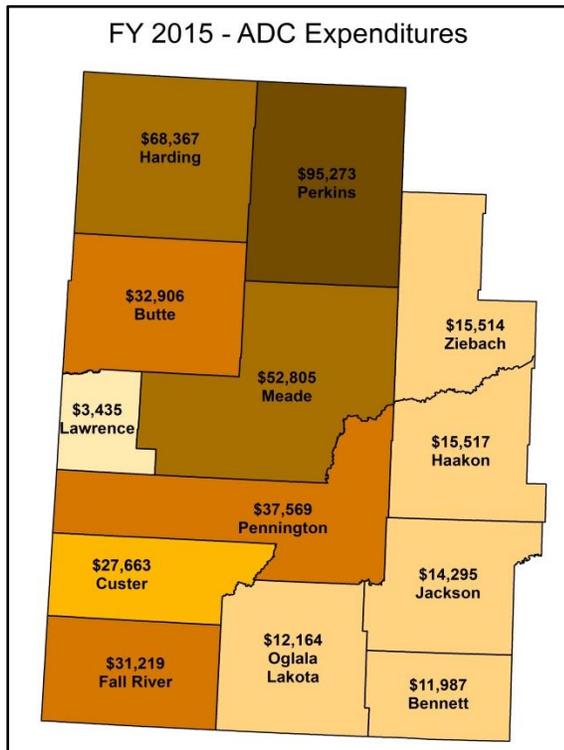
Coyote populations in Region 1 seem to be on the increase from the past few years based upon requests for service from producers, the number of coyotes removed as well as field reports. Livestock prices were favorable and the demand for predator control from livestock producers was significant. Requests for assistance with predator control increased 42% from 2014. In addition, a very large number of red fox were removed in the northwestern part of South Dakota. Over 200 red fox were removed in Harding County alone which was a substantial increase from the



past several years. Wildlife damage staff responded to 431 requests for assistance due to livestock losses caused from predators (i.e. coyote and fox) and worked with 256 livestock producers across the region to address these concerns. GFP has a great relationship with several predator control districts in western South Dakota and works cooperatively to address livestock losses. GFP provided a total of \$6,000 of cooperative funding to the Perkins County Predator Control District and the Multi-County Predator Control District (Harding, Butte, and part of Lawrence and Meade counties) for additional aerial predator control services. These funds provided additional hours of aerial predator control within these counties, which were directed by local GFP wildlife damage staff. Wildlife damage staff in cooperation with USDA-Wildlife Services took 3,573 coyotes and 319 fox and drove more than 120,000 miles and worked 6,172 hours to address these concerns. The total cost of predator control in Region 1 was \$278,712.



The demand for beaver control increased in 2015 over the past several years in Region 1. Wildlife damage staff responded to 86 requests for assistance regarding beaver damage where they removed 492 beaver and assisted 80 different landowners. Requests for assistance primarily



involved damage to trees used as wind-breaks to over-winter cattle and dams used for livestock watering. GFP also responded to several nuisance species (i.e. raccoon and skunk) requests for assistance. Wildlife damage staff drove a total of 34,226 miles and worked 1,879 hours to address these issues. Total program expenditures were \$75,546.

During the spring and summer months, western South Dakota experienced good range conditions in most areas which typically lowers requests for assistance with prairie dog encroachment. But, in 2015 GFP saw a substantial increase from last year in regards to the number of acres of prairie dog colonies that were controlled. However, plague is still prevalent in many areas as well as impacts from previous control efforts still have the areas of encroachment much less than the

record levels of the late-2000's. Thirty-eight landowners received prairie dog control services due to encroachment from adjacent public lands. GFP spent \$59,352 to control 3,324 acres of prairie dog colonies which had encroached private land. The utilization of zinc-phosphide treated oats (i.e. poison oats) was used as the primary control technique.

Overall, the ADC portion of the WDM program had a total expenditure of \$427,701 in Region 1. Wildlife damage staff drove more than 172,000 miles and worked more than 9,000 hours to address the 557 requests for assistance, which directly impacted 370 producers and landowners.

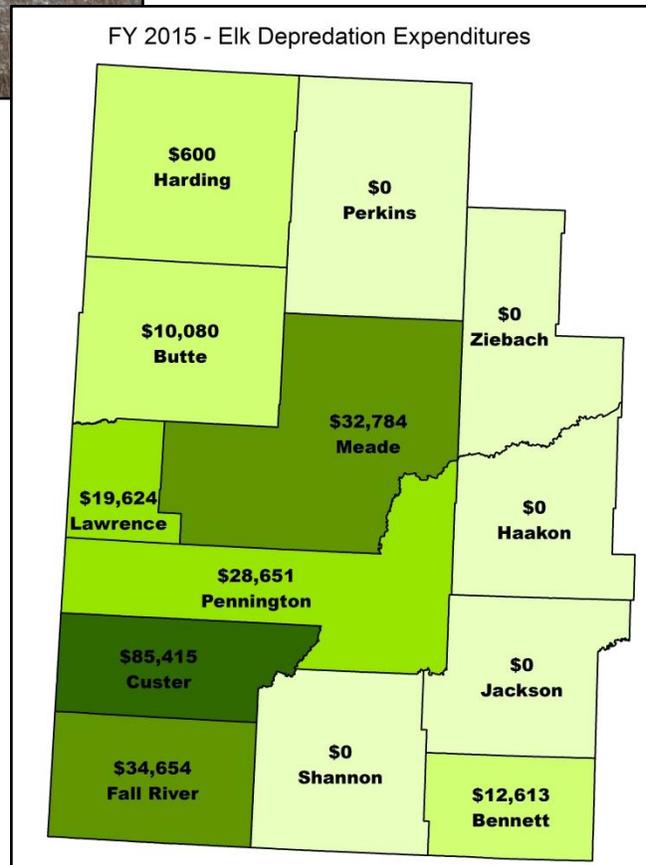
The winter weather during 2015 was fairly mild which eased wildlife depredation assistance demands for big game depredation (i.e. deer, elk and turkey). Big game populations



continue to be at or below management objectives in most areas within Region 1. Staff responded to 11 deer complaints throughout the region and drove 2,500 miles and worked a total of 138 hours to address these concerns. There were six stackyard contracts implemented with a cost of \$24,300. GFP spent a total of \$70,950 working with landowners and producers within

Region 1 to provide wildlife damage assistance regarding white-tailed deer and mule deer.

As GFP manages for higher elk populations in most hunting units in the Black Hills, GFP also enhanced several programs regarding elk depredation assistance to better meet the demand of landowners and producers that experience impacts from elk. Region 1 staff responded to 66 requests for service regarding elk, primarily in and around the Black Hills area and Bennett County. Staff drove 8,128 miles and worked 792 hours to address these landowner concerns. Many of these requests were addressed by utilizing contracts for food plots and hayland areas that experience elk usage. There were 42 food plot contracts and six hayland contracts initiated in 2015 primarily to address elk



depredation to actively growing alfalfa, growing crops and hayland areas. This was an increase over the past few years and largely linked to GFP's effort to increase social tolerance as we manage for higher elk numbers in most hunting units. In a 2013 survey of landowners, GFP found



that 38% of landowners indicated that their tolerance levels for more elk would increase if GFP enhanced its depredation abatement services. Additionally, there were seven elk access contracts initiated, where elk hunting access on over 25,000 acres of private property was provided for hunters as well as assistance to landowners which are experiencing elk depredation. Overall, GFP spent a total of more than \$226,000 for elk depredation assistance, in Region 1.

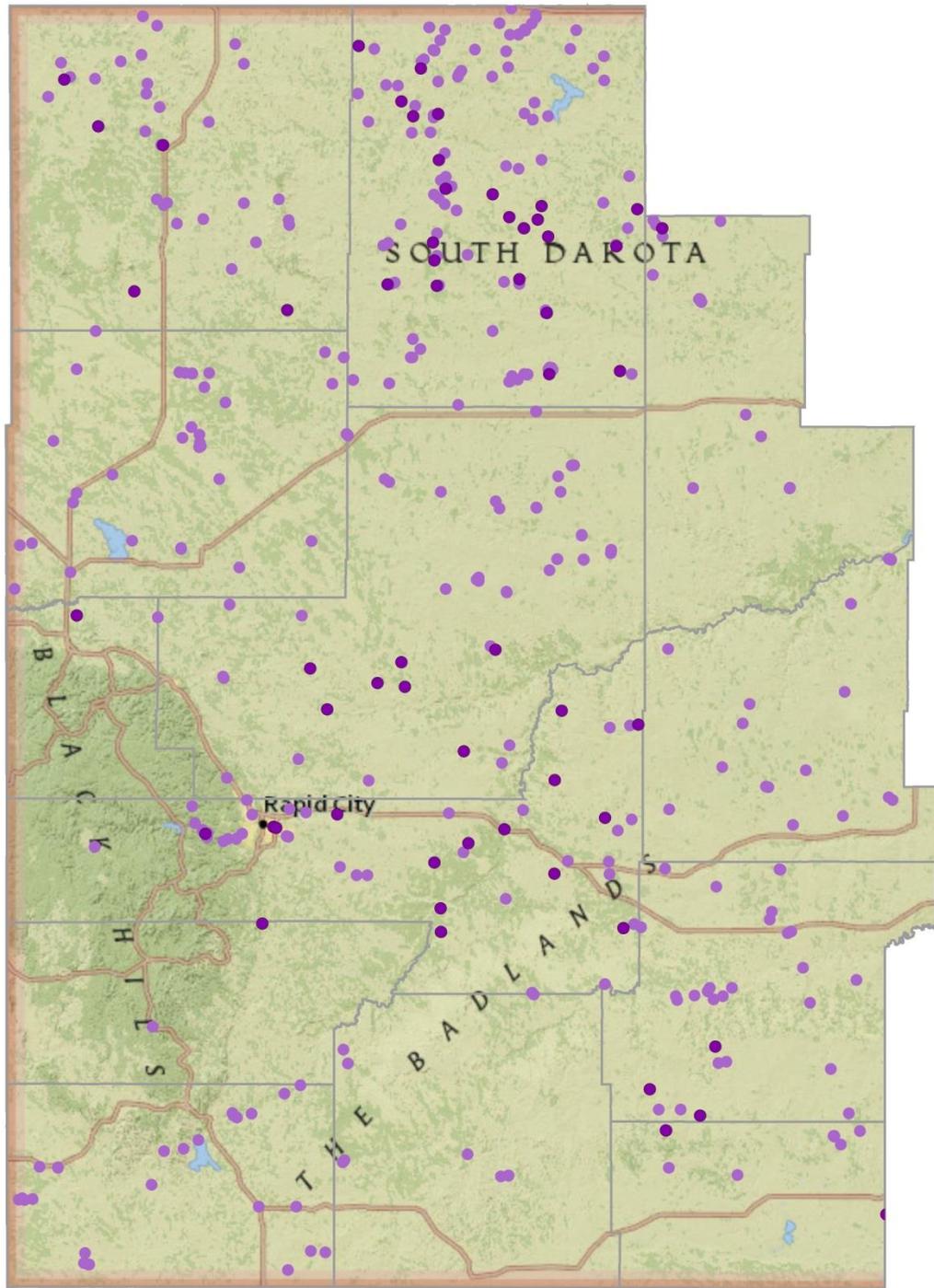
Lower turkey populations in the Black Hills as well as many hunting units on the prairie resulted in a small workload regarding assistance with turkey depredation. Region 1 wildlife damage staff only responded to three requests for assistance with turkey depredation. Most times these concerns were related to damage to stored-feed supplies which involve large concentrations of birds. Staff drove a total of 3,700 miles and worked 303 hours to address these concerns with a total program cost of \$13,476. GFP utilized trap and relocation efforts as a management approach, as there are large amounts of public land in the Black Hills with many areas that are suitable for release sites that will not impact private properties. GFP also worked with the city of Rapid City to implement several management techniques regarding urban Canada geese at Canyon Lake park and the airport as well as worked with the city to address urban deer issues. Wildlife damage staff worked 69 hours on several other wildlife damage concerns such as Turkey vultures causing issues in towns and depredation from raptors on goose and turkey producers. GFP spent a total of \$12,000 for all of these other types of requests for assistance.



Lastly, Region 1 also has one wildlife damage specialist specifically responsible for responding to mountain lion calls regarding livestock loss as well as public safety threats. Wildlife damage staff responded to 46 calls and drove a total of 9,699 miles and worked 997 hours with a total program cost of \$39,536.

In summary, GFP responded to a total of **627 requests for assistance** within the entire WDM program which directly impacted **442 landowners and producers** in Region 1. The total program expenditures including staff time, mileage, equipment and materials totaled \$815,858.

Region 1 Wildlife Damage Management Activities – FY 2015



- Multiple Complaints in Same Area
- Complaints Responded to in FY15

Region 2 – Program Report

Region 2 is located within the central portion of South Dakota and consists of 20 counties most of which border the Missouri River. The terrain varies greatly and includes rough river breaks, expansive grasslands, as well as significant acreages of cropland. Wildlife species are abundant and include white-tailed deer, mule deer, pronghorn antelope, upland game, waterfowl, turkeys, furbearers, and a few elk. Region 2 has seven field positions (wildlife damage specialists) and one supervisory position. Primary job duties for most field staff revolve around the protection of livestock from predators and assistance with deer depredation. Additionally, these duties include beaver and prairie dog control and assistance with turkey, Canada goose, and elk depredation.

The winter weather during 2015 was cold but little deep snow accumulated. With deer populations at or below management objectives in most areas, as well as, impacts from Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) a few years ago, deer depredation was minimal. In several areas deer did congregate into large herds and wildlife damage staff responded to 17



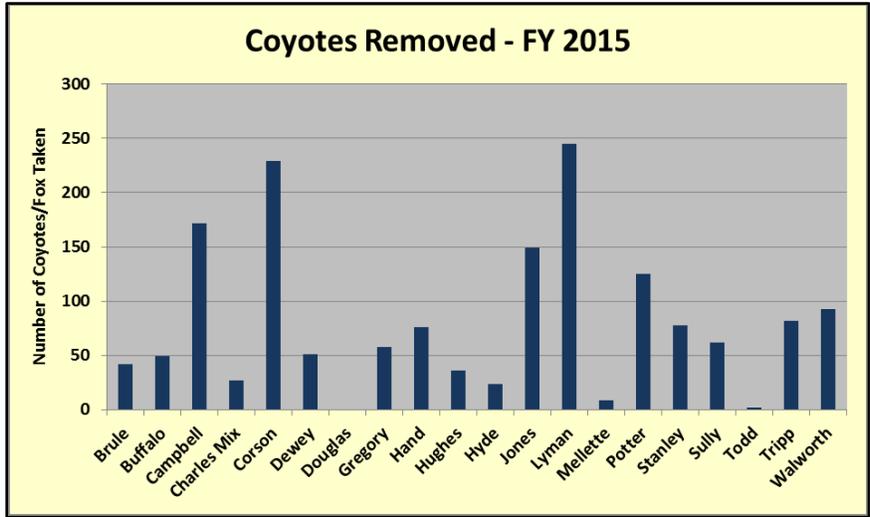
requests for assistance dealing with white-tailed deer and mule deer throughout the region. Most requests involved the protection of stored-feed supplies. Wildlife damage staff drove 5,221 miles and worked 364 hours to address these concerns. Staff also initiated one stackyard contract with a landowner to protect stored-feed supplies as well as one protective fencing contract to protect a

commercial vineyard and nursery. Overall, the total program expenditures were \$90,065 well below the record highs during the winter of 2010-11.

The coyote population in central South Dakota seemed to be slightly increasing or stable as wildlife damage staff responded to only slightly more requests for service than in 2014. Livestock prices were very favorable and the demand for predator control from livestock producers was present. Wildlife damage staff responded to 338 requests for assistance due to livestock loss from predators (i.e. coyote and fox). Staff worked with 229 livestock producers across the region to address these concerns. GFP also provided 68 hours of aerial predator control in the counties east of the Missouri River in Region 2. Additionally, GFP provided \$1,500 of cooperative funding to



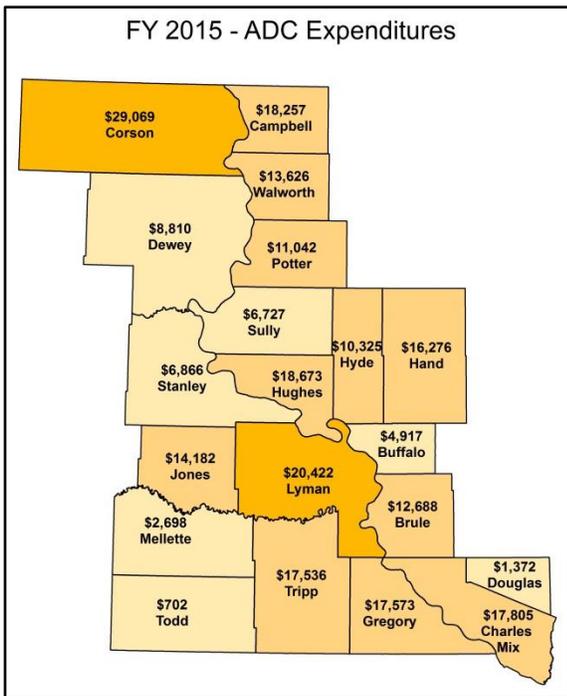
the Campbell County Predator Control District for increased aerial predator control which was



directed by local GFP wildlife damage staff. In cooperation with USDA-Wildlife Services, wildlife damage staff took 1,606 coyotes and 3 fox and drove 68,173 miles and worked 3,922 hours to address these concerns. Total expenditures for predator control in Region 2 were \$164,529.

Wildlife damage staff also responded to 97

requests for assistance regarding beaver control where staff removed 202 beaver. Most beaver damage occurred near larger riparian areas and the volume of workload was similar to last year. Most calls involved damage to trees used as wind-breaks for livestock protection and damage to livestock dams. Wildlife damage staff drove a total of 34,226 miles and worked 828 hours to address these concerns which directly impacted 77 different landowners in Region 2. Total program expenditures were \$33,150.



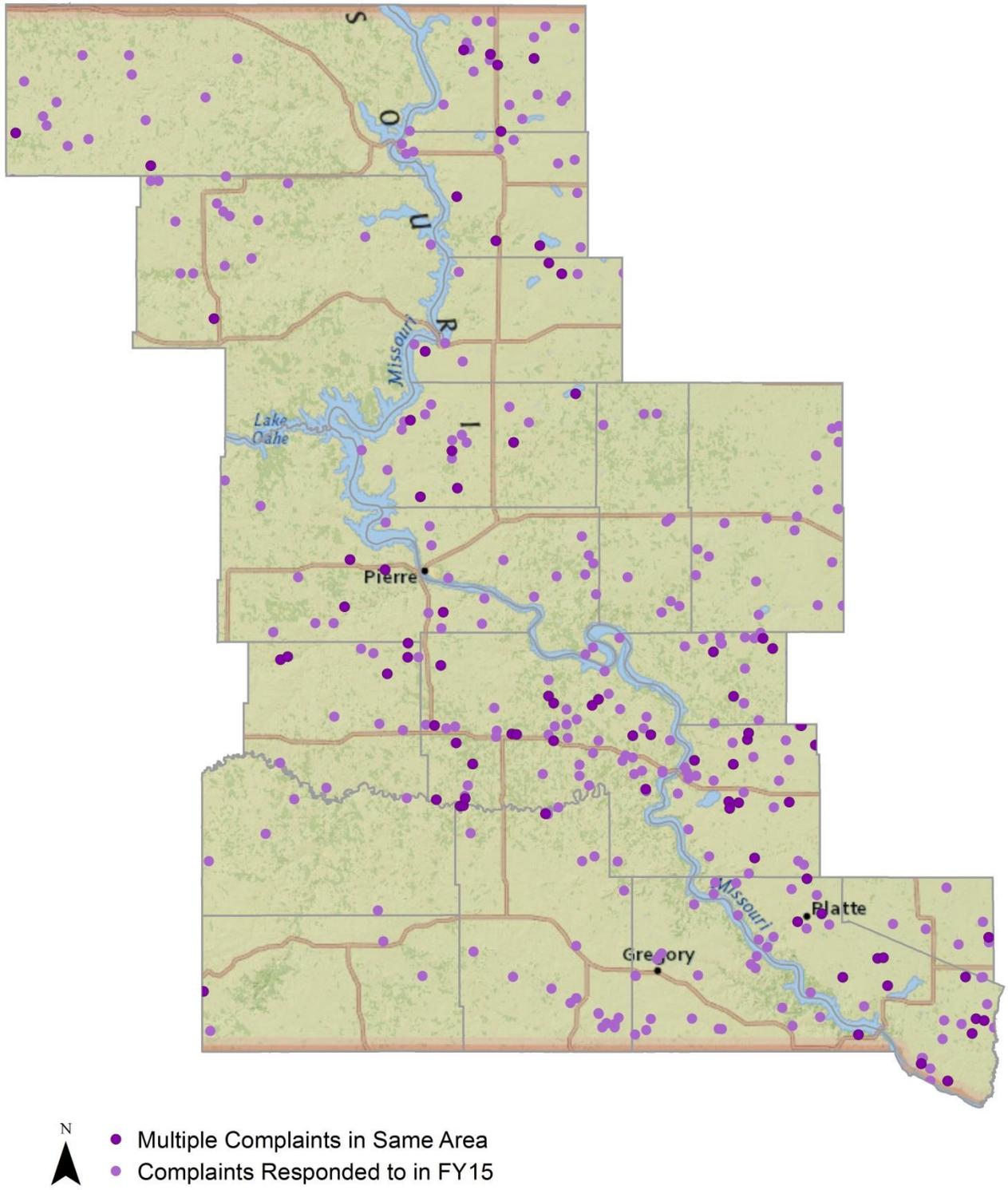
GFP also responded to 36 requests for assistance involving nuisance species (i.e. raccoon, skunk, and mink). Most requests were handled with technical assistance; however, staff did provide direct assistance with some requests. Wildlife damage staff drove a total of 1,663 miles and worked 136 hours to address these issues. Total program expenditures were nearly \$6,500. Region 2 wildlife damage staff also controlled prairie dogs on 441 acres of private land which were encroached from adjacent public land. Overall, the ADC portion of the WDM program had a total expenditure of \$249,564 in Region 2. Wildlife damage staff drove more than 92,000 miles and worked more than 6,100 hours to address the 474 requests for assistance, which directly impacted 342 producers and landowners.

As Canada geese and row crops continue to expand westward in eastern South Dakota, Region 2 wildlife damage specialists have seen an increased demand for assistance. Region 2 wildlife damage staff responded to six requests for assistance with Canada goose damage to growing crops. These requests occurred primarily on the eastern edge of Region 2, where more wetland and crop interspersions occur. Staff worked 292 hours and drove 3,661 miles to address these concerns with a total program expenditure of \$11,040.

Wildlife damage staff responded to six requests for assistance involving turkey damage to stored-feed supplies. Due to a mild winter in central South Dakota and being at or below population objectives in most areas, requests for assistance with turkeys was minimal. Wildlife damage staff also responded to two requests for assistance regarding elk depredation, as well as, work involving damage caused by other wildlife species.

In summary, GFP responded to a total of 508 requests for assistance within the entire WDM program which directly impacted 375 landowners and producers in Region 2. The total program expenditures including staff time, mileage, and equipment and materials totaled \$429,866.

Region 2 Wildlife Damage Management Activities – FY 2015



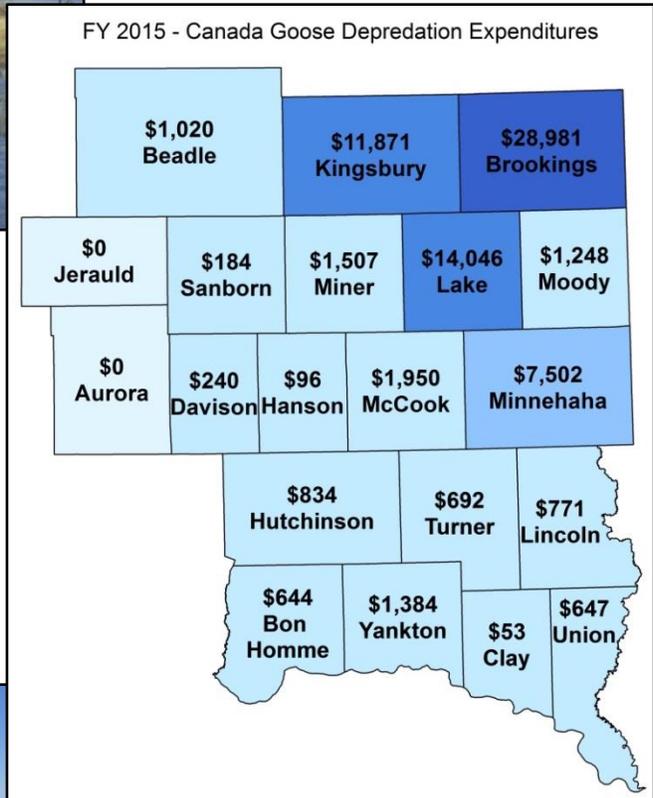
Region 3 – Program Report

Region 3 is located in the southeastern portion of South Dakota and consists of 20 counties. The landscape varies considerably and includes croplands, grasslands, wetlands, and river drainages, but croplands dominate the majority of the counties within Region 3. Wildlife species are abundant and includes white-tailed deer, a few mule deer, upland game, waterfowl, furbearers, and turkeys. The Region has six field positions (wildlife damage specialists) and one supervisory position. Primary job duties for most field staff revolve around assistance with Canada goose depredation, the protection of livestock from predators, and beaver control as well as deer and turkey depredation assistance.



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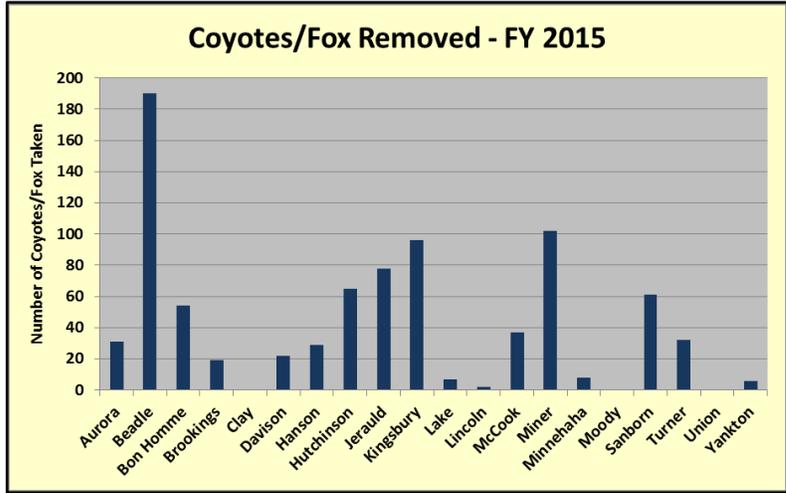
The weather during the spring of 2015 was near normal. The resident Canada goose population remains above management objectives, and moderate commodity prices demanded many resources to address landowner concerns regarding goose damage to growing crops. GFP staff worked directly with 136 landowners and responded to 154 requests for assistance regarding Canada goose damage to growing-season crops



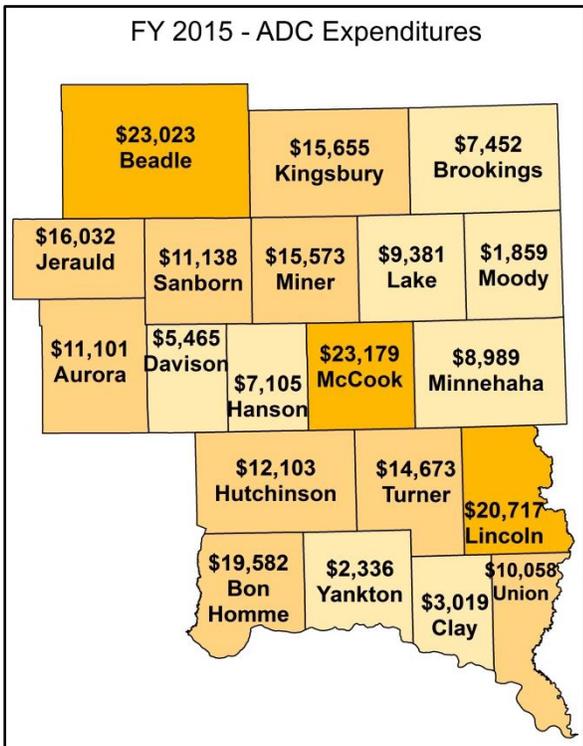
(primarily soybeans). This workload has decreased from previous years due to lower Canada goose numbers as well as implementing 145 landowner permits to remove small numbers of geese from problem areas. Staff drove 15,377 miles and worked 603 hours to respond to these requests. Region 3 wildlife damage staff also added 509 Canada goose nests, which

greatly reduced crop damage in those localized areas and resulted in reduced staff time and effort. GFP also permitted 145 private landowners to haze and remove Canada geese from problem areas to reduce crop damage. Overall, the total program expenditures were \$68,231.

High coyote populations and favorable livestock prices had wildlife damage staff extremely busy in regards to predator control. Requests for assistance with coyotes were up 16% from last year. Staff worked with 210 livestock producers to reduce or alleviate livestock loss due to coyotes and responded to 275 requests for assistance. Wildlife damage staff, in cooperation with USDA-Wildlife Services, took 827 coyotes and 12 fox. Wildlife damage staff worked 3,606 hours and drove nearly 50,000 miles to address these concerns. GFP also provided 130 hours of aerial predator control in Region 3. Total program expenditures for predator control were \$146,079 in Region 3.



Wildlife damage staff also responded to 152 requests for assistance with beaver damage and removed 244 beaver. Most types of damage consisted of the flooding of crops, damage to trees in planted wind-breaks or near homes, and damage to roads. Staff assisted 122 different landowners with beaver damage concerns. They drove 19,604 miles and worked 1,059 hours to address these problems within Region 3. Total program expenditures were \$40,809.



Wildlife damage staff also responded to 49 requests for assistance with nuisance species such as raccoons, badger, skunk, and mink. Most requests were handled with technical advice or loaner-traps. However, staff did provide direct control for commercial watermelon producers suffering damage from raccoons as well as a few other circumstances. GFP staff drove 1,939 miles and worked 97 hours to address these complaints. Overall, the ADC portion of the WDM program had a total expenditure of \$217,349 in Region 3. Wildlife damage staff drove over 71,000 miles and worked more than 5,400 hours to address these 476 requests for assistance, which directly impacted 377 producers and landowners.

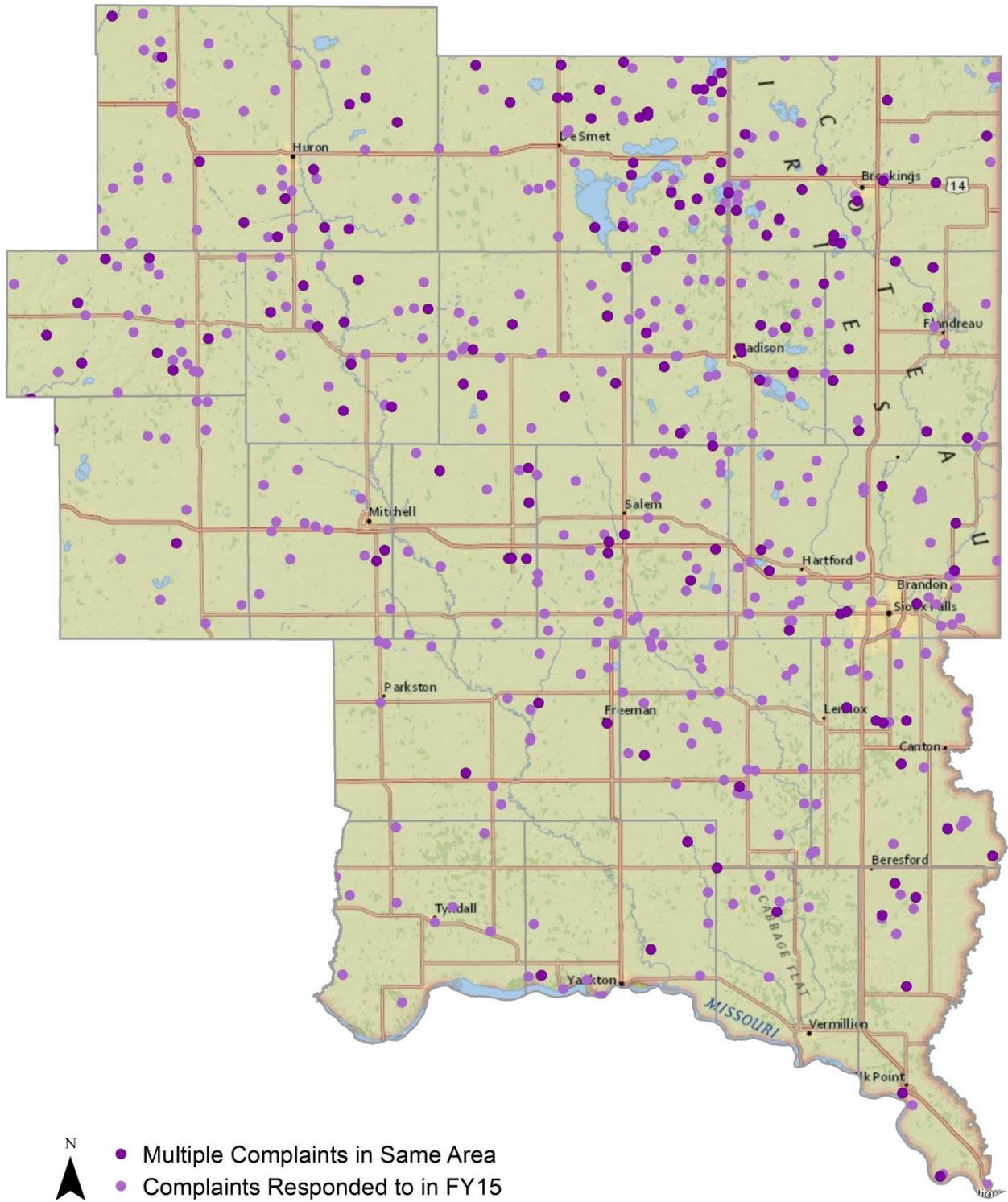
With deer populations at or below management objectives in most areas, as well as, impacts from Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) in previous years in some areas, deer depredation was minimal. However, deer populations have been recovering in some areas and wildlife damage staff responded to 34 requests for assistance regarding deer damage. Most of these requests were handled with loaner panels to protect stored livestock feeds and the utilization of hazing techniques. These services impacted 31 different landowners in Region 3. Wildlife damage staff also initiated one stackyard contract to permanently protect stored-feed supplies. Staff drove 9,396 miles and worked 854 hours to address these requests for assistance. Overall, the total program expenditures were \$62,006. This area of the program has seen substantial decreases since the winter of 2010-2011, due to overall lower deer numbers.



Wildlife damage staff also responded to several turkey issues within Region 3, as well as, several other requests for assistance involving other wildlife species. In addition, GFP assisted the city of Sioux Falls with several management techniques to address urban Canada goose concerns and an overabundant deer population in several areas of the city.

In summary, GFP responded to a total of 679 requests for assistance within the entire WDM program which directly impacted 555 landowners and producers in Region 3. The total program expenditures including staff time, mileage, equipment and materials totaled \$406,737.

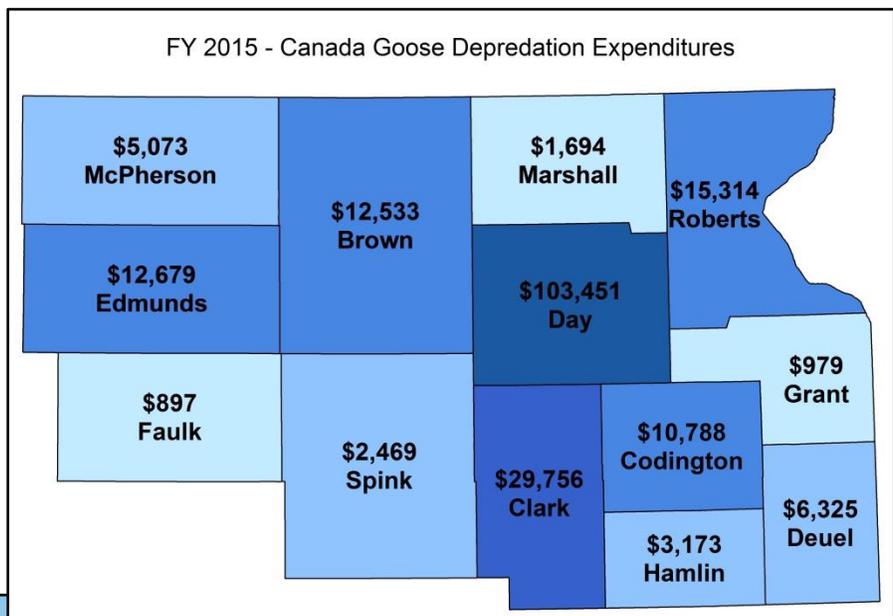
Region 3 Wildlife Damage Management Activities – FY 2015



Region 4 – Program Report

Region 4 is located in the northeastern portion of South Dakota and consists of 13 counties. The landscape varies greatly and includes croplands, rolling grasslands, many wetlands and lakes, and river drainages, but croplands dominate the majority of the counties within Region 4. Wildlife species are abundant and include white-tailed deer, waterfowl, upland game, furbearers, and turkeys. It has six field positions (wildlife damage specialists) and one supervisory position. Primary job duties for most field staff revolve around assistance with Canada goose and deer depredation, the protection of livestock from predators, and beaver control.

Region 4 experienced a normal spring for 2015 and Canada goose production was about average. Coupled with plenty of water on the landscape and a resident Canada goose population that remains above current management objectives, as well as, moderate commodity prices resulted in a significant demand of resources to address landowner concerns. GFP staff responded to 447 requests for assistance regarding Canada goose damage to growing-season crops (primarily soybeans) which was a 10% decrease from 2014. GFP staff worked with 284



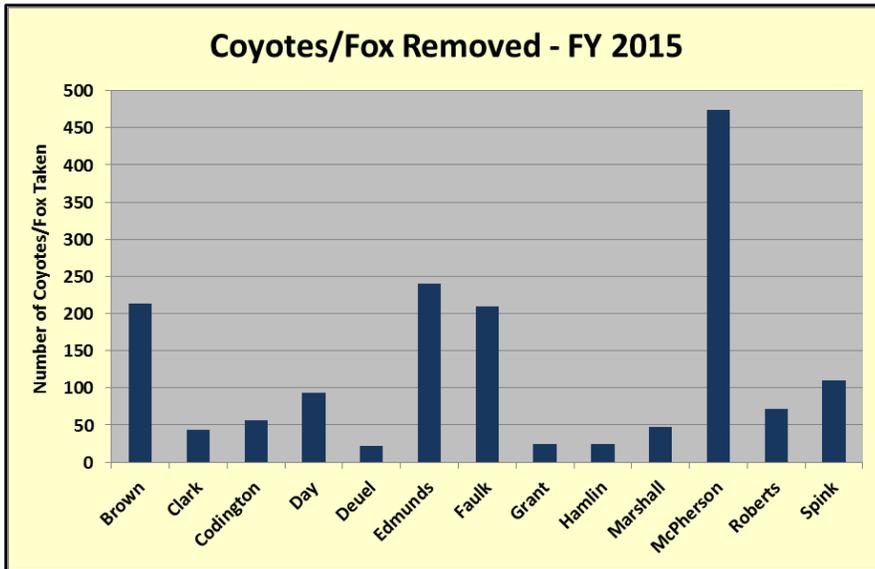
designed to alleviate goose damage around wetland edges. Overall, total program expenditures were \$271,791.

landowners to provide crop protection from Canada goose damage. Staff drove 43,185 miles and worked over 8,000 hours to respond to these concerns. Region 4 wildlife damage staff also added 436 Canada goose nests which greatly reduced crop damage in those localized areas as well as reduced staff time and effort. GFP permitted 199 landowners to haze and take Canada geese to alleviate damage to growing crops. GFP also initiated 44 food plot and buffer-strip contracts which are

The winter weather of 2015 was cold but there was little deep snow. With deer populations at or below management objectives, deer depredation concerns were minimal. Wildlife damage staff responded to six requests for assistance regarding deer damage to stored feed supplies, nearly a 90% decrease from fiscal year 2013. These services impacted six different landowners in Region 4. Wildlife damage staff also initiated one stackyard contract to protect stored-feed supplies and two protective fencing projects to alleviate damage to commercial orchards. Staff drove 2,023 miles and worked 156 hours to address these concerns. Overall, the total program expenditures were \$15,412.

Wildlife damage staff also responded to several turkey issues within Region 4 where large flocks of birds were causing damage to stored-feed supplies. These requests for assistance were handled primarily with protective netting and persistent hazing techniques. Several other requests for assistance involving other wildlife species were also addressed in Region 4. Overall, the game species (e.g. deer, Canada geese, and turkey) portion of the WDM program had a total expenditure of \$372,489 in Region 4. Wildlife damage staff drove 52,916 miles and worked more than 12,000 hours to address these 461 requests for assistance, which directly impacted 495 producers and landowners.

High coyote populations as well as favorable livestock prices had wildlife damage staff busy in regards to requests for assistance with coyotes. Staff worked with 219 livestock producers to



reduce or alleviate livestock losses caused from predators and addressed 302 requests for assistance. This was a 26% decrease from 2014 and largely attributed to the cooperative efforts of the three predator control districts that exist in Region 4. As a result, wildlife damage staff in

cooperation with USDA-Wildlife Services took 1,617 coyotes and 14 fox. Wildlife damage staff worked 2,934 hours and drove 44,099 miles to address these concerns. GFP also provided 38 hours of aerial predator control in Region 4. GFP provided \$4,500 of cooperative funding to the Faulk County, Edmunds County, and McPherson County Predator Control



Districts for increased aerial predator control. These aerial predator control services were coordinated by local GFP wildlife damage staff. Total program expenditures for predator control were \$141,365 in Region 4.

Wildlife damage staff also responded to 96 requests for assistance (up 17% from last year) with beaver damage where they removed 252 beaver. Most types of damage consisted of the



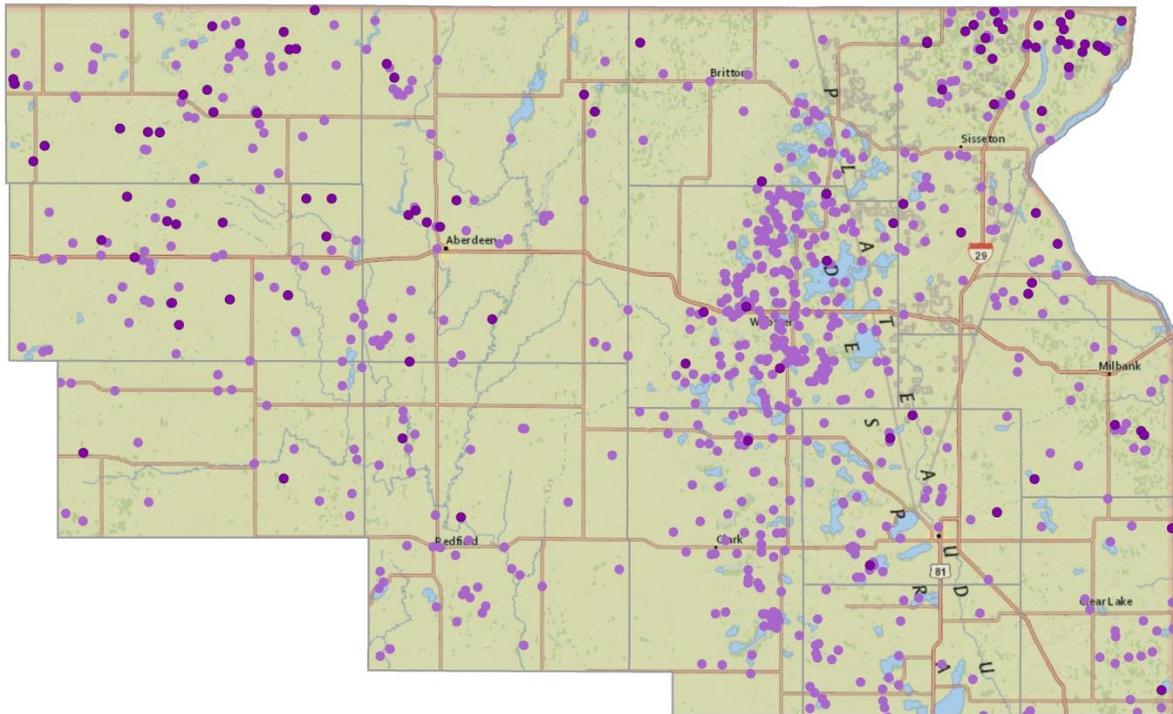
flooding of crops, damage to trees in planted wind-breaks or near homes, and damage to roads. Staff assisted 77 different landowners with beaver damage concerns. They drove nearly 22,000 miles and worked 1,038 hours to handle these problems within Region 4. Total program expenditures were \$41,654.

Wildlife damage staff also responded to 16 requests for assistance with nuisance species such as raccoons, badger, skunk, and mink. Most requests were handled with technical advice or loaner-traps. However, staff did provide direct control in a few

circumstances. GFP staff drove 370 miles and worked 42 hours to address these complaints. Overall, the ADC portion of the WDM program had a total expenditure of \$210,613 in Region 4. Wildlife damage staff drove more than 76,000 miles and worked more than 4,700 hours to address these 414 requests for assistance, which directly impacted 312 producers and landowners.

In summary, GFP responded to a total of 1,074 requests for assistance within the entire WDM program which directly impacted 608 landowners and producers in Region 4. The total program expenditures including staff time, mileage, equipment and materials totaled \$583,102.

Region 4 Wildlife Damage Management Activities – FY 2015



- Multiple Complaints in Same Area
- Complaints Responded to in FY15

