



Landowners Matter

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Continuous CRP Enrollment Open

Beginning **June 9** agricultural producers and/or landowners will have the opportunity to enroll eligible land into many different continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) practices. There are over 140,000 acres available in South Dakota for enrollment in the Pheasant SAFE, Western SD Grassland Wildlife SAFE, Duck Nesting Habitat Initiative, Flood Plain and Non-floodplain Wetland Restoration, Farmed Wetland Program. Many of the continuous CRP practices have additional payment incentives to protect sensitive lands like wetlands and highly erodible lands. Rental rates were also adjusted in 2013. Cropping history eligibility dates have been updated to four out of the last six years from 2008 to 2013 as well.

Another opportunity that has no limit on the acres that can be enrolled is the pollinator initiative. This initiative is a fantastic way to add pheasant nesting and brood rearing habitat to your land. It has a minimum size limit of 0.5 acres and no maximum acreage limit. Seed mixes may contain up to 25% native grasses, but must contain minimum of 9 wild flowers with 3 blooming in each spring, mid-summer, and late summer. There is also a \$150/acre signing incentive payment offered with this initiative.

The United States Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will also be offering 1 year extensions to many general CRP contracts that expire this September 30. All general CRP contract holders with contracts expiring this year will receive a letter from FSA indicating if they are eligible for the extension.

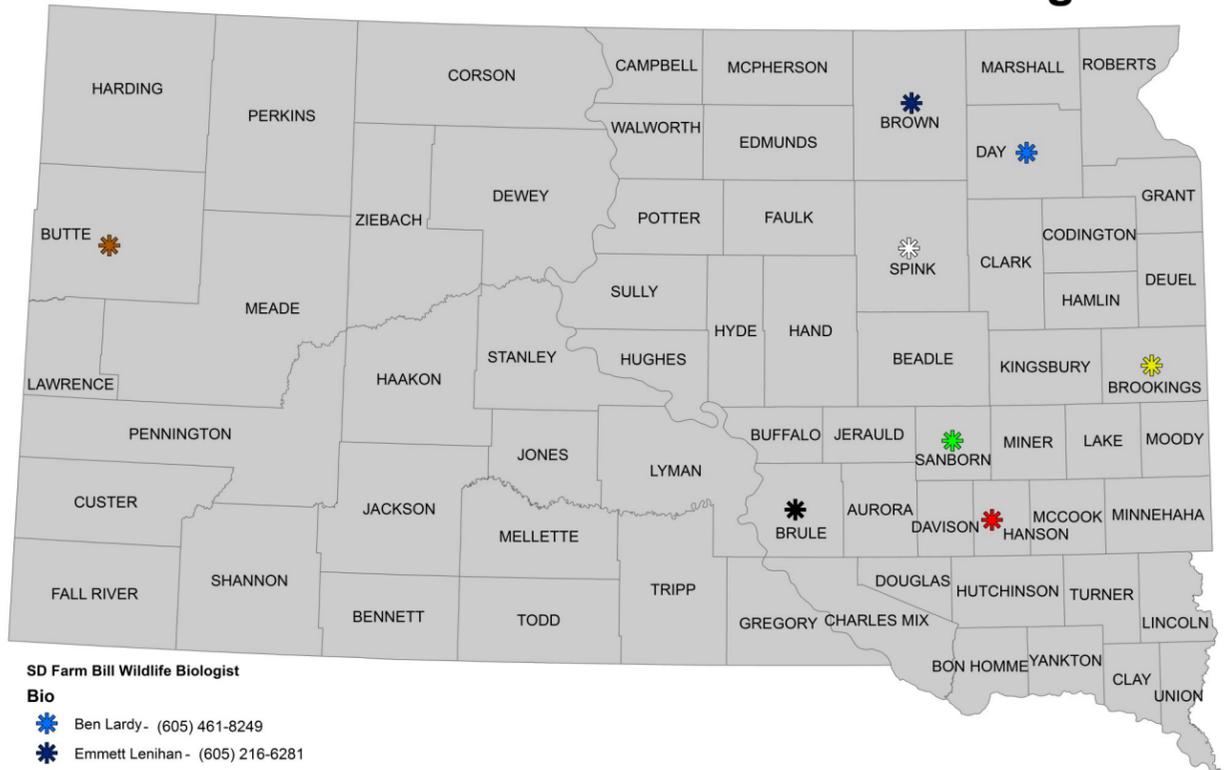
CRP plays an important role in South Dakota's wildlife populations. "The undisturbed grassland habitat that CRP provides in South Dakota is vitally important for grassland nesting songbirds, pheasants, waterfowl, as well as big game species like white-tailed deer," said Chad Switzer, GFP wildlife program administrator. "There is a proven record on the benefits of CRP in South Dakota in both influencing wildlife populations and by providing producers with another option in their land management decisions."

For more information or to submit an offer, agricultural producers should set up an appointment with their local [USDA Farm Service Agency Office](#).

Pheasants Forever Farm Bill wildlife biologists are also available to answer any questions you may have about how CRP could work for you. See Map below for the nearest biologist.



Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Wildlife Biologists



- SD Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist**
- Ben Lardy - (605) 461-8249
 - Emmett Lenihan - (605) 216-6281
 - Eric Magedanz - (605) 880-2651
 - Gillian Bee - (605) 461-9062
 - Mike Blaaid - (605) 770-6859
 - Open
 - Sam Fryman - (605) 461-1696
 - Jim Ristau - (605) 730-3474



GFP Makes Several Changes to Wildlife Damage Management Program

Nearly a year ago, the South Dakota State Legislature approved an additional one-dollar surcharge on most hunting licenses which was added to the existing five-dollar surcharge that has been in place since 1998. This one-dollar surcharge designates additional funds to be allocated to South Dakota Game, Fish and Park's predator control and beaver removal programs. The creation of this one-dollar surcharge increases funding for these activities by approximately \$300,000 annually. GFP put these additional monies to use immediately by allocating addi-

Keith Fisk. "However, the truth is you will never be able to completely stop some types of wildlife damage such as predator loss on livestock—but with these additional funds we are making a significant difference."

GFP also wrapped up their second year of an experimental management technique which involved utilizing volunteers to attempt to harvest resident Canada geese in several counties in eastern South Dakota during the month of April. Two hundred and eighty participants were

randomly selected and authorized to harvest Canada geese in several areas of eastern South Dakota. Each participant was issued a permit from GFP which allowed the total harvest of 25 Canada geese. Partici-

pants were limited by certain methods such as they could not utilize calls, blinds, and decoys and all harvested Canada geese had to be donated to the Sportsmen Against Hunger (SAH) program; all conditions of the federally issued permit that GFP authorized the participants under. In 2013, participants harvested 820 birds and in 2014 they harvested 643 birds. Based off of the weight of the birds that were evaluated, approximately 95% of these birds were considered resident Canada geese, the geese that

cause crop damage during the summer months. Although GFP authorized the take of up to 7,000 Canada geese they were not expecting 100% success. "Six hundred and forty-three Canada geese harvested in 2014 was much less than we anticipated," said Fisk. "We are still evaluating the impacts of this management technique but initial information from field-staff and landowners suggest this technique did not meet the desired management goals."

Canada goose depredation abatement is in full-swing this summer as crops are emerging and Canada geese are rearing their young. To reduce crop damage caused from Canada geese, GFP operates an aggressive damage abatement program. Due to the high resident Canada goose population and high commodity prices in conjunction with the cropland and wetland interspersed that occurs in eastern South Dakota, GFP has cooperatively worked with more than 250 landowners to address Canada goose damage on nearly 500 locations during the spring and summer months of 2014.

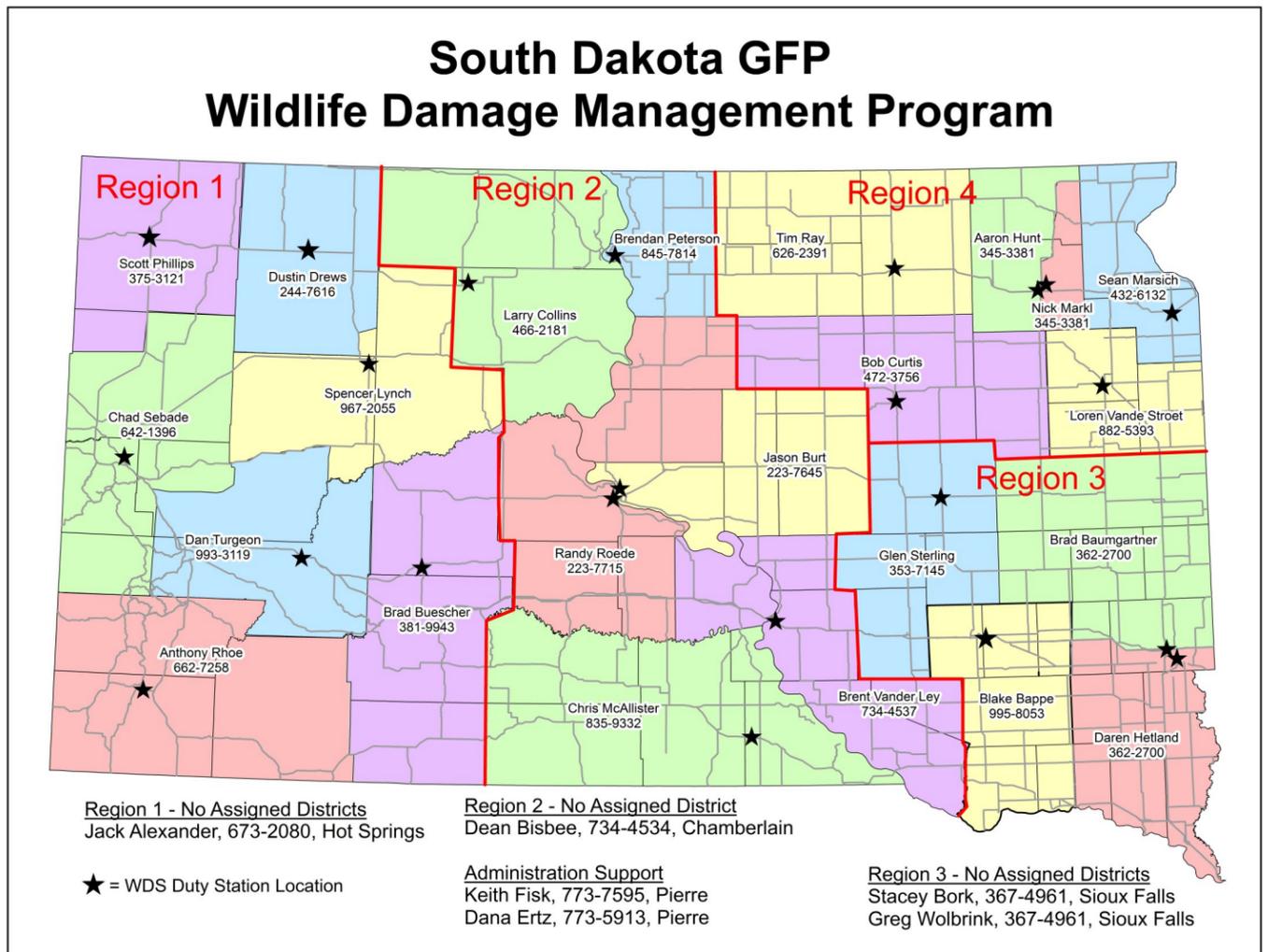
The most effective technique for managing wildlife populations is through recreational hunting. Although additional hunting seasons and increased bag limits have not lowered the resident Canada goose population in South Dakota, wildlife managers are hopeful they will have an impact at some point. As a requirement of receiving GFP's wildlife damage services, landowners are asked to sign an agreement that states they will allow free reasonable access to non-family members who obtain proper permission and that they do not charge a fee for hunting access. "Because the funds used to operate GFP's wildlife damage management program comes from 100% sportsmen's dollars, it's imperative that hunters have access to private land," said Fisk. "As the resident Canada goose population continues to be above management objectives, GFP encourages landowners to utilize hunters to target resident Canada geese during the August Management Take and Early September goose season." Not only does utilizing hunters haze birds away from problem-areas in August, it also reduces the number of birds in the overall population.

For more information or assistance, producers should contact their local wildlife damage specialist or GFP Division of Wildlife office.



tional field-time to existing wildlife damage staff as well as hiring three new wildlife damage specialist positions and cooperating with USDA-Wildlife Services (WS) to have a second airplane stationed in eastern South Dakota for more effective responses to livestock loss events. From February 15 to June 25, 2014 GFP and WS have cooperatively flown over 250 hours regarding aerial predator control in eastern South Dakota. These hours are in addition to the nearly 700 hours of flight-time that WS funds for predator control in western South Dakota. GFP also has provided \$22,000 of matching funds to local predator control districts for increased aerial predator control, statewide. Through these joint efforts, over 6,000 coyotes were removed, statewide, in response to livestock-loss events and for the protection of livestock.

The locations of the three new wildlife damage specialist positions are Philip, Mitchell, and Webster. These positions have been filled for approximately nine months and have been working cooperatively with local farmers and ranchers to address all types of wildlife damage assistance requests. These services range from predator control due to livestock loss to crop damage caused by Canada geese, to damage to stored-feed supplies from white-tailed deer or mule deer. "Each year we (GFP) work with several thousand South Dakota producers and farmers to reduce or alleviate all types of wildlife damage impacts to private property," said GFP wildlife damage program administrator,



South Dakota has lost an estimated 1.8 million acres of grasslands since 2006. Sitting on the top of a hill on the Perman family's Rock Hills Ranch, you would swear the entire world was made of grass. Rich, green, lush tall grass, sprinkled with native wild flowers and the yellow of wild sweet clover. Lyle likes the thought of that.

South Dakota Leopold Conservation Award winner, and while the award itself pronounces "extraordinary achievement", the Perman's don't see what they are doing as anything out of the ordinary.

"Leopold himself said, 'The landscape of any farm is the owner's portrait of himself', we have

"I didn't even know something like this existed," Doud said of the Leopold Award. "The greatest thing I have found with winning, is meeting like-minded people, people who are tied to the land."

Chris Schellpfeffer, Sand County Foundation, expanded on Dowd's and Perman's comments.

"The Leopold Award gives landowners and conservationists a platform to discuss the holistic process. As we get further and further from the family farm, people are removed from the process and these awards give us a chance to reach these people and discuss long term sustainability."

These all seem like lofty goals for a family who lives near Lowry, SD, but their love of the land and what they do with it is their first and foremost objective.

"We want to work WITH the land," said Lyle's wife Garnet. "It's our love of the land that makes all this work."

"We have more ways we can improve what we have, work with what comes along and feel blessed with our land and family," Lyle said. "I am a story teller and I have a good story to tell."

The Leopold Conservation award has been given to five South Dakota Families.

2013 – Guptill Family

Guptill Ranch is a 7,000-acre cattle operation that Pat and Mary Lou Guptill have owned and managed for the past 25 years. With their five children, they are caretakers of this special landscape in western South Dakota. The area features grasslands with rolling hills and a wooded creek running through the ranch.

2012 – Kopriva Family

The Koprivas have made conservation a family tradition, and their grassland, wa-

ter, and wildlife habitat management techniques are a clear demonstration that responsible environmental management and successful agricultural operations can readily co-exist.

2011 – Mortenson Family

Clarence Moretenson's vision has been embraced by his sons, Todd, Jeff, and Curt, who currently operate Mortenson Ranch. In the 1980s, Todd learned about holistic management that moves cattle across the land similar to the movement of buffalo herds. In the spring, the herds graze on grasses in riparian areas while stamping seeds into the ground to help establish trees and grasses. In summer, the cattle are moved to the uplands. In the 1990s, researchers observed a substantial increase in native tree and shrub species along the ranch's streams, as well as an impressive increase in wildlife populations.

2010 – Rick & Marlis Doud

Rick and Marlis Doud operate 6,000 deeded acres and 2,500 leased acres on which they run nearly 400 cow-calf pairs. They made a significant switch in their management technique when they transitioned to rotational grazing and a summer calving program at the beginning of the decade, which the Douds credit as the catalyst for tremendous improvement in the productivity and diversity of the grasses in their rotated pastures even in the face of severe drought.



Lyle and Luke Perman discuss rotational grazing in one of their winter pastures.

"The world needs grasslands, and lots of them," Lyle says as he looks across the sea of green, knee high grass and even taller yellow sweet clover. He pauses, tilts his head down slightly (which is something he tends to do when he really wants to get a point across) "We need to save the grasslands. People, and especially people who are removed from the land, need to know the importance of grasslands and what they mean to the food that is on their table."

Lyle's rotational grazing system, and his motto "Our number one goal is not to let a drop of water leave the ranch," are important parts of the holistic ranching approach his family uses in managing the ranch that won them the 2014 South Dakota, Leopold Conservation Award.

The Leopold Conservation Award is presented by the Sand County Foundation, the South Dakota Grassland Coalition, the South Dakota Cattlemen's Association and many other partners, including South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks. The partners intent is to annually recognize extraordinary achievement in voluntary conservation, inspire other landowners by example and help the general public understand the vital role private landowners play in conservation success.

The Perman family is the fifth

to live with nature and use it to our advantage. This ground around us is grassland, it's not farmland, so it's my job to make it the best grasslands possible," Lyle said.

The Permans run 250 cattle on their ranch, using a rotational system to graze each pasture once in a year, although this year, the prevalence of the aforementioned sweet clover will allow some pastures to be grazed twice.

Doing things differently isn't always easy.

"When you try different conservation practices, you need great partners," said Lyle's son, Luke. "You need lots of patient partners, to be good stewards of the land."

The Leopold Conservation Award



Perman's Rock Hills Ranch lies tucked into a sea of rolling grass near

has a \$10,000 cash prize, but for the Permans and past award winners, the money is secondary. Haakon County rancher Rick Doud, is a past winner and feels that the award brings something more to the table.

For more information on the Leopold Conservation Award, visit: www.leopoldconservationaward.com

Flushing Bars for Wildlife

By Mike Blaalid, Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist

As our cold, seemingly never-ending winter wore on, the first thing on everyone's mind was the green-up that warmer spring temperatures and longer days would bring. That exact thing is what wildlife prepare themselves for early. Along with storing enough fat reserves to get them through harsh winter conditions, it is equally important for wildlife to come out of winter in good physical condition to take on the stresses and challenges that the breeding season brings. This is very important to upland nesting birds, like pheasants, as a decrease in body condition can lead to a decrease in clutch size as well as hen mortality.

If pheasants are fortunate enough to enter the breeding season in good physical condition, they are

not completely out of harm's way. As hayland begins to green-up in the spring, these areas provide a very attractive place for hens seeking a quality nest site. However, these same areas also provide farmers and ranchers with livestock forage. As a result, many hens are incidentally lost due to normal spring haying operations.

There is a solution to reduce incidental hen mortality, and the answer is the use of a flushing bar. A flushing bar is a device that typically mounts on the front of a tractor that precedes the implement being used for haying.

A flushing bar creates a disturbance in advance of the implement to allow extra time for the nesting bird to flush, with a goal of avoiding injury or death.

Although the nest is normally destroyed, pheasants are resilient

nesters and the majority will re-nest in nearby undisturbed cover. By using a flushing bar, not only will more hens survive the breeding and nesting seasons, but many will also go on to

successfully hatch a clutch, leading to potential increases in annual bird populations which will possibly lead to subsequent population growth in later years.

In addition to using a flushing bar, simply modifying haying patterns may be an additional option to help save wildlife utilizing hay fields. Conventionally, hay fields are cut starting from the outside and working towards the opposite edge of the field or from the outside into the center of the field. Haying in this manner has a tendency to concentrate wildlife in a continually shrinking area of cover or forces wildlife into the



open, exposing them to predation. By starting in the center and working out, wildlife will have escape cover to decrease their susceptibility to haying operations and predation.

Incorporating one or both of these wildlife friendly methods will have a positive impact on upland game and non-game species. For landowners interested in learning more about flushing bars, they are urged to contact their local Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist through their local USDA Service Center.



For more information on flushing bars, visit:
www.theflushingbarproject.net

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