

PRIVATE LANDS HABITAT & ACCESS PROGRAMS

STRATEGIC PLAN SUMMARY

"Serving People, Managing Wildlife"

**South Dakota Department
of Game, Fish & Parks**

Division of Wildlife—Habitat Section



Introduction

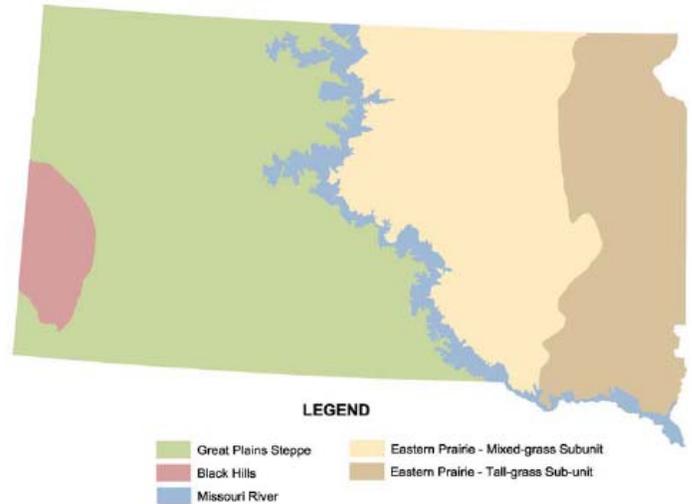
South Dakota is blessed with diverse and abundant wildlife resources, and its residents have come to deeply appreciate and hold close this valuable part of their lives.

Since the majority of South Dakota lands are privately owned, farmers, ranchers and other private landowners are indeed the most important stewards of our wildlife resources and the habitats they depend on. At the same time, SD Game, Fish & Parks (SD GFP) is the state agency charged with managing South Dakota's public trust wildlife resources for everyone's use, benefit and enjoyment.

This strategic plan will serve to guide SD GFP as it continues to deliver a successful private lands habitat and access program. It will also provide direction as SD GFP adapts its initiatives, programs and incentives to the changing needs of South Dakota landowners, citizens and visitors.

Land Management Approach

South Dakota has a wide variety of landscapes that for planning purposes were divided into the following four ecoregions: Black Hills, Great Plains Steppe, Missouri River and Eastern Prairie.



Ecoregions are areas with similar physical and biological attributes, each comprised of interacting ecosystems with varying biological communities.

This approach recognizes the distinct characteristics of each ecoregion and the need to be adaptive with program development and delivery.

Public Attitudes

Management of wildlife not only involves biological and other science-based management practices, but also includes careful consideration of the wide array of social values held by the general public and landowners of South Dakota.

A significant proportion of South Dakota residents feel that it is important to conserve or protect as much fish and wildlife habitat as possible. In addition, most feel that healthy fish and wildlife populations are important to the economy and well-being of South Dakota residents.

Private Lands Habitat & Access Programs

Dating back to the mid-1970's, SD GFP has offered an evolving toolbox of voluntary private land habitat programs to cooperating landowners. These habitat programs have been adapted to complement opportunities offered by federal "Farm Bill" programs and to better meet the needs of private landowners that desire to establish and enhance wildlife habitat.

This plan provides a thorough background on the past and current efforts of the private lands habitat and public access programs. Often it is beneficial to know where we have been and where we would like to be so we are better prepared to meet future challenges and opportunities.



The conservation provisions of the "Farm Bill" are vitally important to private land habitat work in South Dakota, providing landowners a variety of programs to reduce soil erosion, improve water quality and provide high quality wildlife habitat.

Widely recognized as the most successful conservation program in the last twenty years, the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) not only has provided the foundation for SD GFP's Walk-In Area Program, but many of SD GFP's habitat programs are carefully designed to complement and enhance the wildlife benefits of CRP.

Issues, Challenges & Opportunities

While there were many other important issues and challenges considered in the preparation of this plan, some emerged as significant statewide topics:

- New Farm Bill
- Program Objectives/Delivery
- Commercialization of Wildlife
- Pressures Influencing Habitat Loss
- Landowner Demographics
- Providing Public Access
- Bio-fuels and Genetically Modified Crops
- Budget & Potential Funding Sources
- Public Outreach & Education
- Existing and New Conservation Partners
- Matching Services to the Landscape and Landowner Objectives

In addition, issues, challenges and opportunities were identified for each ecoregion. This will allow SD GFP to modify and adapt program objectives and delivery to meet area specific needs of our conservation partners and cooperating landowners.



Strategic Planning—Goals, Objectives & Strategies

The scope of this strategic plan is defined by two broad, but distinct goals.

GOAL #1

In cooperation with private landowners, manage, conserve, and restore habitat to sustain diverse wildlife populations.

GOAL #2

Provide the public with high quality opportunities to access fish and wildlife resources on private land.

For each goal, statewide and ecoregion specific objectives and strategies have been established to guide program implementation.

In Conclusion

SD GFP understands that we cannot achieve these goals alone, and that this endeavor will require strong partnerships with other local, state, federal and non-governmental organizations. But most importantly, we need the support and cooperation of South Dakota's landowners and a general public that is informed of the importance and value of South Dakota's diverse native habitats and those wildlife species that depend upon them.

This strategic plan will be referred to regularly as a guiding document to address emerging issues and opportunities. While we plan to formally revisit this document again in 2012, it will remain flexible to help ensure that our children will be fortunate enough to enjoy the great wildlife resources of South Dakota.

To learn more, please visit us online at <http://www.sdgifp.info/Wildlife/privatelands/Index.htm>

"The goals of the SD GFP Private Lands Habitat & Access Programs are to provide technical and financial assistance to cooperating landowners for the establishment and management of wildlife habitat that will enhance the survival and reproduction of desired wildlife species and to provide public access to high quality habitat on private land for recreational opportunities."