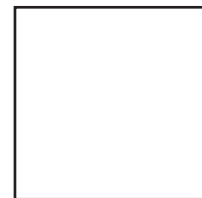




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LANDOWNERS

Matter



Habitat Pays Breaks New Ground

What do South Dakota hunters and farmers have in common? A lot, including a passion for the land and a love for tradition.

That is why the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks is teaming up with the South Dakota Department of Agriculture on the new Habitat Pays campaign, which targets landowners.

Habitat Pays connects farmers and ranchers with the tools to help them develop and maintain wildlife habitat in ways that make sense on their land.

"Habitat conservation is important in South Dakota. Through these efforts, we conserve our land, enhance our wildlife population and preserve our outdoor traditions," Governor Dugaard said. "I commend the departments of Agriculture and Game, Fish and Parks for finding common ground and working together on this issue."

How It Started

In December 2013, Governor Dugaard hosted a Pheasant Habitat Summit. Hundreds of stakeholders gathered in Huron to learn more about the condition of South Dakota's habitat through presentations and discussions from key leaders throughout the state.

Following the summit, Governor Dugaard formed a habitat work group. He charged members with developing recommendations focused on practical solutions for maintaining and improving pheasant habitat compatible with agriculture production.

The 13-member group met regularly, reviewing survey results, scientific data, letters and suggestions, and released a report in September 2014. This report is available at habitat.sd.gov.

"The work group represented a variety of different interests, so our collaboration began early on," said South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Secretary Kelly Hepler. The group included sportsmen and women, landowners, leading conservation and agriculture academics, legislators and government officials.

One of the group's recommendations was to create an awareness campaign to connect landowners with the many resources available for establishing habitat on their land. Another recommendation was to implement a website specific to habitat management with information on federal, state, local and non-government programs for landowners to learn about and access when appropriate. Together these recommendations became Habitat Pays.

Partnering With Agriculture

"South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks understands working with agriculture, and specifically the South Dakota Department of Agriculture, is key to the success of Habitat Pays. Agriculture is the state's number one industry, with a \$25.6 billion economic impact," Hepler noted. "Truly understanding the farmer's point of view is a critical component for success."

South Dakota Department of Agriculture Secretary Lucas Lentsch agrees. "Farmers and ranchers know what is best for their land and their operation. With Habitat Pays, we want to help landowners find the right programs to help them meet their personal land use goals."

The two departments are working together to meet with agribusinesses, commodity organizations, cooperatives and producers to discuss ways to foster collaboration, improve communication and achieve mutually beneficial outcomes.

Habitat.sd.gov

"The newly developed Habitat Pays website is a great resource for the farmers and ranchers of South Dakota," said Secretary Hepler. "We invite everyone to check it out."

Videos on the site feature stories of landowners in various parts of the state who have taken advantage of programs to maintain or establish habitat.

The site includes a comprehensive list of resources, along with a list of habitat advisors who are experts in conservation programs and habitat planning. They possess the knowledge of federal, state and local programs to assist landowners in finding the right program or programs to meet their personal habitat and land use goals. Habitat advisors are available to assist landowners in designing, developing and funding habitat improvements on private lands. Background information, images and contact information for each of the habitat advisors is available on the website so landowners can put a name and a face together.

“It’s a way of connecting with farmers and ranchers and helping them implement wildlife habitat where it makes sense to do so,” said Secretary Hepler.

“Every operation is different, presenting different needs and challenges. Especially with the recent market changes, producers are looking

“There are many programs run through the federal government, state government and private organizations that provide cost-share and technical assistance to producers looking to establish or maintain habitat acres on their land. The complexity of navigating the large number of habitat programs can be overwhelming for landowners to know which of the many programs best meet their specific needs,” said Secretary Lentsch.

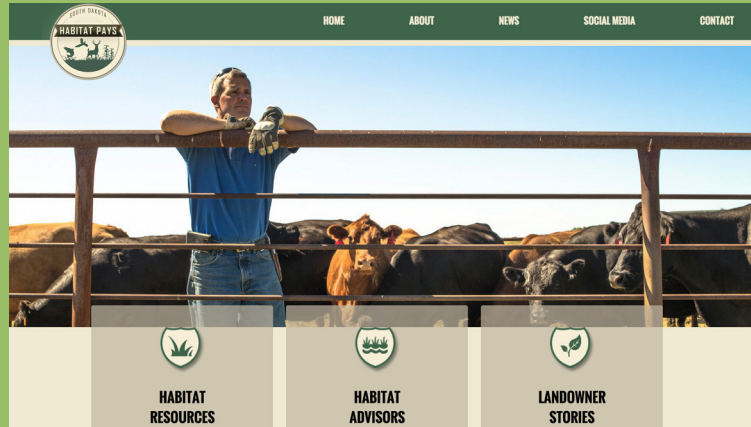
That is where the habitat advisors come in.

Spread the Word

Habitat Pays relies on farmers and ranchers to promote the program through word of mouth.

“Together, we hope to conserve, manage, protect and enhance South Dakota’s wildlife resources – while respecting the important role of landowners and our need for them to remain economically viable and productive,” said Secretary Lentsch.

“Habitat Pays provides landowners with the resources and financial incentives they need to achieve their individual habitat development goals. Habitat truly does pay because of opportunities for improved soil health, increased land value and abundant wildlife for all South Dakotans,” concluded Secretary Hepler. ■



for ways to make every acre pay. In some cases, input costs can run higher than the value of the crop grown on that ground,” Secretary Lentsch said. “In cases like these, it can make a lot of sense for producers to look at putting those acres into habitat.”

Turning land into habitat can improve soil health and increase land values. Plus, a wide variety of financial incentives are available for landowners.

Resources for Landowners

Dozens of federal, state and non-governmental programs are available to help landowners establish or maintain habitat.

Assistance is provided in the form of funding, resources and expertise. See full descriptions of these types of habitat programs online at habitat.sd.gov.

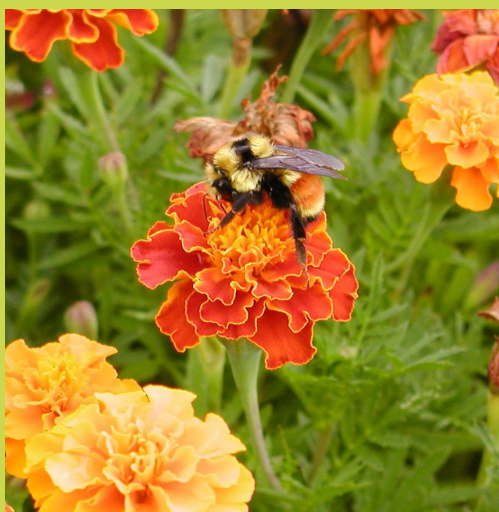
- Grassland Habitat
- Wetland Habitat
- Woody Habitat
- Food Plots
- Wildlife Habitat Management
- Hunting Access Programs
- Watershed Protection
- Forestry Programs
- Resource Conservation
- Other Habitat Practices

**WITHOUT THE SUPPORT OF THESE LANDOWNERS,
MUCH OF THE ABUNDANT WILDLIFE HABITAT WE
ENJOY WOULD NOT EXIST.
—SECRETARY HEPLER—**

food sources for butterflies, as well as potential nesting sites for bumblebees.

When selecting sites for native bee habitat, exploit areas unproductive for agricultural uses. Use hedgerows, sites along waterways and areas with poor soils or that are difficult to irrigate. Reduce use of toxic insecticides and risks from spraying drift. When selecting sites to create or enhance for native bees, take into account that most forage in an area from 50 feet to a half mile. Consider making habitats as large as possible and close to insect-pollinated crops and consider opportunities to create corridors, such as roadsides, drainage ditches and fencerows.

Select pesticides that are least toxic to bees, control pesticide drift and consider the formulation (soluble powders or granular formulation are generally safer than dusts or wettable powders) as well as the timing. Be aware that pesticide labels are developed mainly with honey bees in mind, without considering that native bees can be active for longer periods than honey bees.



A second major event in the pollinator story is the dramatic decline of the beautiful and highly-recognizable monarch butterfly. The monarch is a unique species because it has a very large breeding area (estimated at 390,000 square miles) and a very small wintering area of only a few acres.

Monarchs east of the Rocky Mountains are members of the eastern population; those west of the Rockies are members of the western population. Monarchs from the eastern population migrate to central Mexico each fall, overwintering in clusters in cool, high-elevation forests. They live off lipid reserves and do not feed until February. This generation breeds in the spring during migration.

Although the species is considered secure, some experts believe the eastern population is in grave danger. A petition was filed with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to list the monarch subspecies *Danaus plexippus plexippus* under the authority of the Endangered Species Act. This subspecies includes both the eastern and western populations. The USFWS concluded that listing may be warranted and solicited information for a status review, which is in progress. ■

The Largest Wildlife Habitat Program in the Country celebrates 30 Years

When people think about wildlife habitat in South Dakota many things might come to mind, one of which is likely to be the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). This year marks 30 years since this program was created as part of the 1985 Farm Bill. It is the largest wildlife habitat conservation program in the U.S.; paying farmers and ranchers to remove agricultural lands from production and establish grassland, trees and restore wetlands for 10 to 15 years at a time.

The original intent of the program was to reduce excessive crop production in the U.S. and help stabilize the agriculture economy. The early 1980s was a farm crisis, which resulted in part from the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, Earl Butz's, policies in the 1970s that encouraged fence-row to fence-row farming. Besides reducing the overproduction of crops, CRP also benefitted the environment by reducing soil erosion, removing carbon from the atmosphere and reducing flooding.

It didn't take long for people to also realize CRP brought value to wildlife habitat. By 1991, South Dakota farmers and ranchers had enrolled more than 1.7 million acres of cropland into CRP and the pheasant population soared from a little more than 1.8 million in 1986 to 4.5 million in 1991. The pheasant population continued to grow to almost 12 million over the next 15 years as South Dakota farmers and ranchers kept over 1.5 million acres of cropland in the program.

Pheasants are not the only wildlife that benefit from habitat created by CRP. More than 1 million acres of CRP land in South Dakota produces 600,000 ducks annually. It provides habitat for many of the state's grassland song birds like the bobolink, dickcissel, and western meadowlark. White-tailed deer prefer CRP fields for fawning and raising their fawns in the spring and summer.

Since 2007, South Dakota CRP enrollments have declined to the current level of 926,000 acres. Currently, the CRP program is limited by a national cap on the number of acres that can be enrolled. Right now, that cap is lower than it has ever been. Help increase this cap by letting congressmen and women and senators know how valuable the CRP program is in South Dakota.

2015 CRP Enrollment Options

This fall there will be more options for enrolling land into CRP than ever before. Landowners can place land into the program in three different ways; continuous CRP, general CRP or grasslands CRP. Cropping history eligibility dates are four out of six years from 2008 to 2013 for the most continuous and general options. In all cases, rental rates have been updated in 2015. Any land being placed in CRP must be owned for at least one year.

Agricultural producers and/or landowners, currently have the opportunity to enroll eligible land into many different continuous CRP practices. There are more than 100,000

Programs Available for Landowners to Reduce Deer Depredation

South Dakota and the wildlife that reside here are no strangers to severe winters and harsh conditions. However, when severe winter weather inundates the landscape for several months, wildlife can often negatively impact farmers and ranchers. During winters with severe weather, deer can form large concentrations and oftentimes move large distances to find shelter near farms or ranches. When this occurs, deer can cause damage to hay and other stored-feed supplies. While these types of conflicts readily occur when deer populations are higher than desired, they may also occur during times of lower deer numbers as well. In some areas, even with very low deer populations, deer can move great distances and congregate near farmsteads. The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) wildlife damage management program is designed to work cooperatively with farmers and ranchers to alleviate or reduce these impacts when concentrations of deer occur.

First and foremost, GFP utilizes hunting seasons to manage the deer population across South Dakota as hunting is the most effective management tool for most wildlife populations. However, when hunting seasons close and farmers and ranchers experience damage to stored-feed supplies from deer, GFP relies on several other important tools to address these damage concerns. A very popular and permanent solution to this type of damage is the construction of permanent stackyards or the erection of portable protective panels to protect hay and other stored-feed supplies from deer. GFP will provide cost-share assistance for the construction of permanent stackyards or will provide portable protective panels. However, if the producer has not experienced deer damage before, GFP will loan protective panels in those situations. If farmers or ranchers store their hay or other feed supplies at the same location year after year, the permanent stackyard option is probably the best. But, if producers move their storage location each year then the portable protective panels work better. Both of these options provide excellent protection for hay and other stored-feed supplies from deer and are permanent solutions for these types of conflicts. Cooperating producers are asked to sign an agreement with GFP that states they allow free reasonable public access to



non-family members that obtain proper permission and that they do not charge any person or entity a fee for deer hunting access. Because GFP's wildlife damage program is funded 100 percent from sportsmen's dollars and hunting is the most effective method to manage deer populations, it's imperative that hunters have access to these properties.

GFP also utilizes a number of different hazing techniques to move deer away from farms and ranches when they form large concentrations. GFP uses propane cannons and other pyrotechnics when possible but due to the proximity to livestock and buildings, these tools may not always be an option. When these situations exist, GFP may utilize depredation hunts to haze deer away or alternative feeding sites to concentrate deer away from farmyards. Depredation hunts and the logistics (i.e. where and when to hunt and who to contact) are coordinated by local GFP staff and the affected producer. GFP utilizes registered hunters and the selected hunters are called with locations, dates, and times of specific hunts. Depredation hunts often involve hunting deer in and around farmyards as well as in areas near livestock. Consequently, safety is always the primary concern and detailed instructions are outlined with every hunter for these hunting situations. GFP works closely with producers to make certain all safety concerns are addressed. Depredation hunts are effective at hazing deer away from farms and ranches because the hunting pressure scares deer away from the immediate area and a small number of deer are removed in the process. Alternative feeding locations can also be used in conjunction with depredation hunts, again to help keep deer away from livestock feeds within farmyards.

Winter weather, local deer populations and the surrounding landscape all help determine what types of damage abatement tools GFP will implement at certain locations. With deer populations lower than their management objectives in many areas of the state, depredation hunts have not been implemented for several years. However, if certain conditions exist depredation hunts serve as an important and effective management tool. Once more, the most effective management approach (and most widely used) with deer damage situations is the utilization of

DAMAGE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

permanent stackyards or protective panels. GFP recognizes that landowners play an important role in wildlife management and value South Dakota's farmers and ranchers as partners. GFP works diligently with many farmers and ranchers every year to address deer damage concerns.

Farmers and ranchers that are experiencing wildlife damage are encouraged to contact their local GFP wildlife damage specialist or GFP office for assistance. The sooner landowners contact GFP, the better the chances are of minimizing the damage before it becomes a significant loss to the landowner. When GFP has the opportunity to protect landowners' hay or stored-feed supplies and disperse the herd of deer before they become habituated to the food source, less damage will be caused. ■

SINCE THE YEAR 2000,
GFP HAS SPENT NEARLY
\$7 MILLION
COOPERATIVELY WORKING WITH
SEVERAL THOUSAND
**FARMERS AND
RANCHERS**
TO ADDRESS DEER DEPREDAATION.

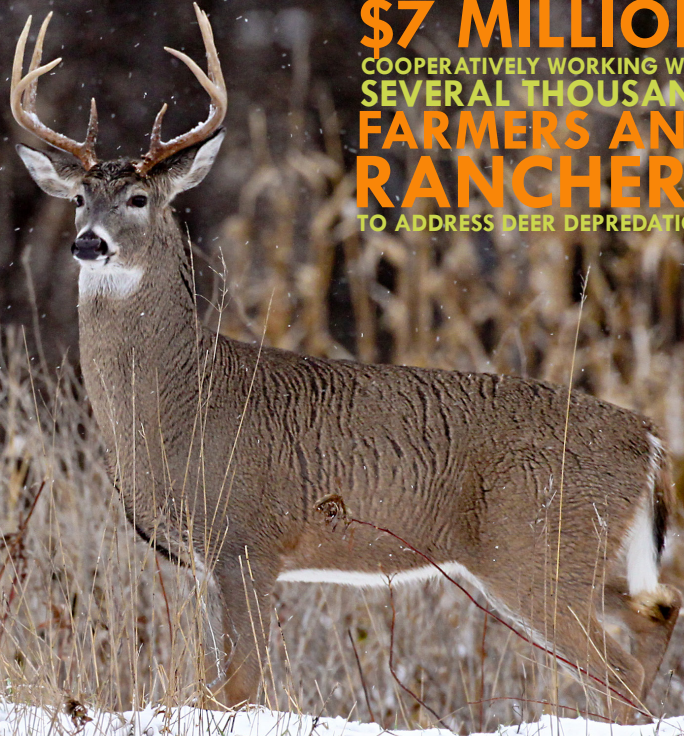
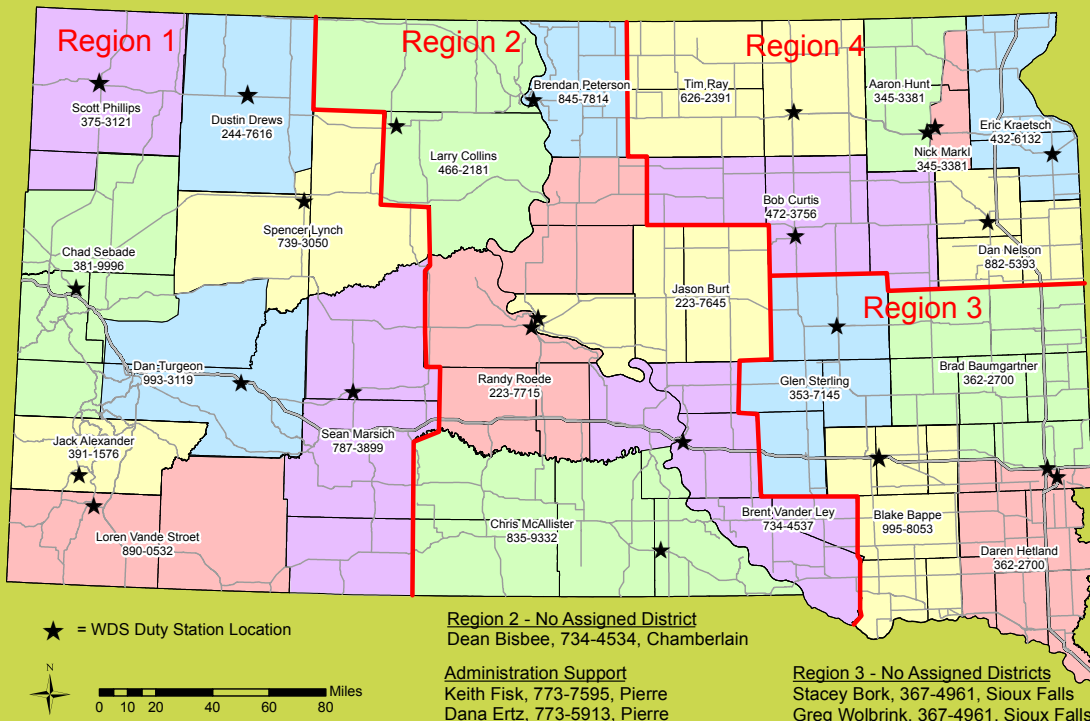


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South Dakota GFP Wildlife Damage Management Program



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Pollinator Predicament



Pollinators play a crucial role in the world. An alarming trend indicates all was not well with the animals that pollinate wild and cultivated plants. There are some suggested practices landowners can incorporate to retain and enhance these important ecological players.

An estimated 60-80 percent of flowering plants rely on animals for pollination. Pollinators may be bats, birds or invertebrates, such as bees, butterflies, beetles, flies or moths. Roughly 35 percent of crop production depends on animal pollinators, in addition to wild plant species. Nothing in nature stands alone. Migratory and resident birds eat fruits, berries and seeds produced by insect-pollinated plants, and young birds rely heavily on pollinator larvae for early growth and development.

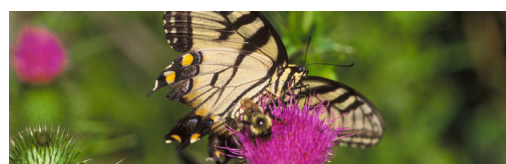
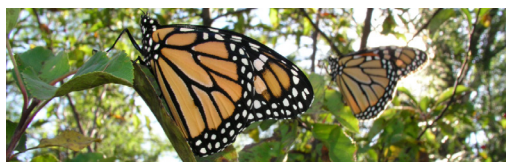
Pollinators in North America are mainly insects, such as bees and butterflies. Honey bees were introduced to North America, but our continent hosts about 4,000 native bee species. Native bees pollinate apples, cherries, squash, watermelons and raspberries. Some crops do not require insect pollination, but it can increase crop yields and fruit production and quality. Insect pollinators need a place to nest and sources of pollen and nectar. Some pollinators are generalists; others require specific plants for the nectar adults eat and the pollen they use to feed their larvae.

One of the first alarming events in the pollinator world was the disappearance of honey bees, a phenomenon eventually called colony collapse disorder. As with most natural events, no single cause has been identified for the dramatic die-offs and disappearance of honey bee colonies. The list of suspects includes habitat loss, pesticides, diseases, parasites and invasive species. While scientists and bee keepers continue to search for answers, many have gained new appreciation for the unsung role of native bees.

Students of ecology know the diversity of plants and animals is key to healthy, natural systems. Even before recent challenges, honey bees never fully replaced native bees. Many native bees forage earlier and later in the day than honey bees and may pollinate flowers under weather conditions that keep honey bees in the hive. Many native bees forage for both pollen and nectar, compared to nectar-seeking honey bees.

Most native bees are solitary and do not sting. More than two-thirds of them nest in the ground. Others nest in tunnels in wood, often in holes created by beetle larvae. Bumble bees are well-known colonial native bees that nest in small cavities. These are the nesting areas native bees seek out. Other primary needs include sources of pollen and nectar.

To accommodate native bees, first assess what you already have. If native bees are present, what plants are they using and what others do they need? Have you noticed bee nests in the ground, in trees or shrubs, or in old rodent burrows? Avoid destroying such sites. Choose from available resources or consult experts to select plants with a wide range of blooming times. Select plants that come from local seed and that are adapted to local growing conditions. Native bees need sources of nectar and pollen from spring through fall. A pollinator planting should ideally have at least three blooming species during each season. Consider proximity to crops. Research has shown farms with natural areas less than a half mile from field edges will have greater native bee diversity and associated pollination benefits. Incorporate grasses, which are larval



HABITAT MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

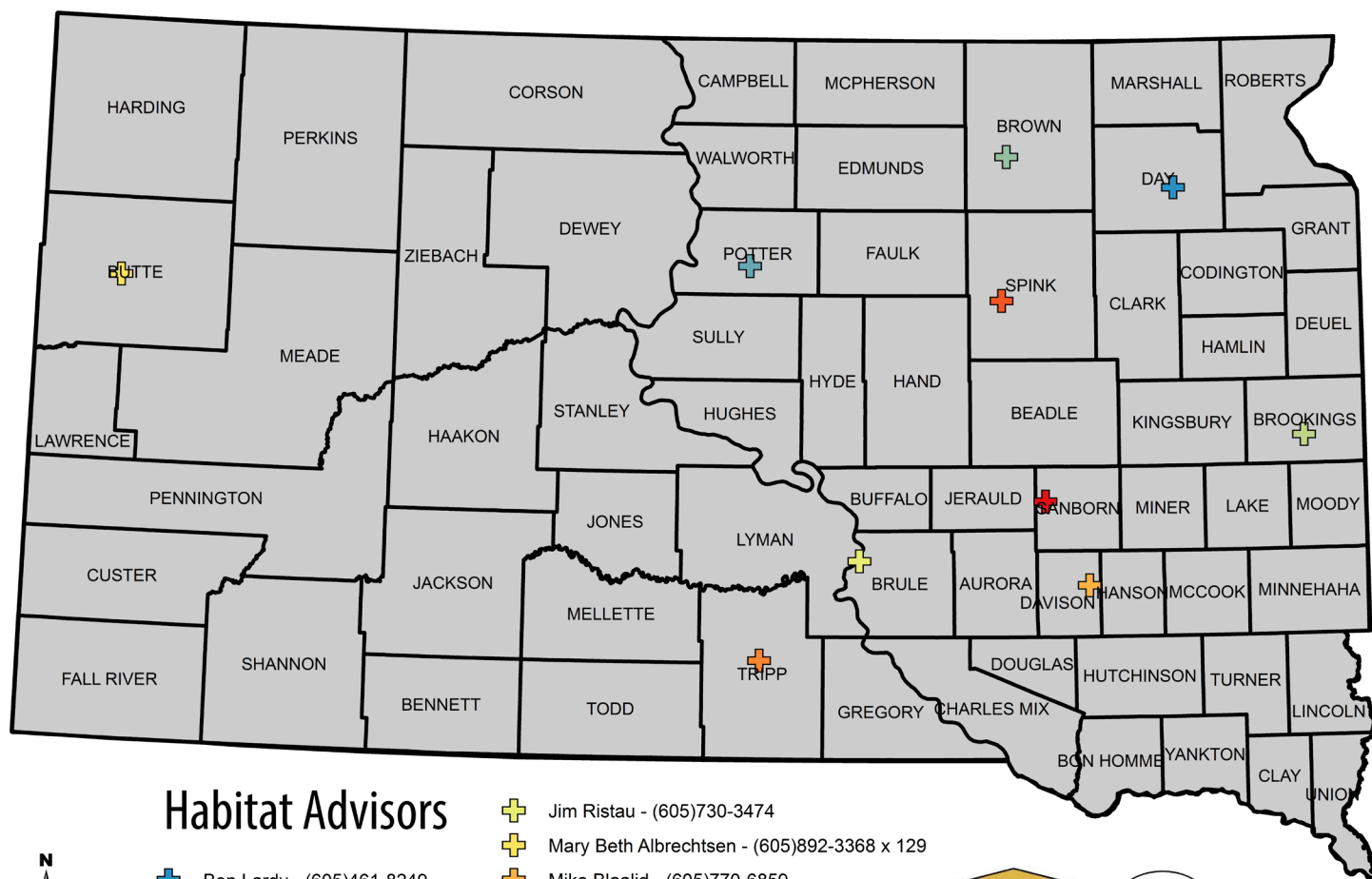
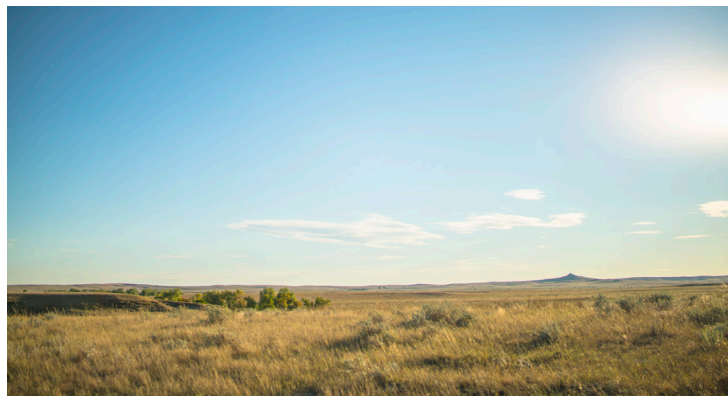
- *Inventory - determine plant resources and existing pollinator habitat. Identify rare or specialist pollinators and investigate their life cycle and related habitat needs.*
- *Grazing is useful when timing, intensity, duration, livestock type and history of grazing on the site are considered. Managed grazing can control invasive species and maintain open, herbaceous areas. Pollinator plots thrive with grazing for short periods and long recoveries.*
- *Use fire conservatively, especially with limited pollinator habitat. Consider refugia as a source of insects to recolonize burned areas. Incorporate "skips" of small, unburned patches. Avoid high-intensity fires unless removing brush or trees. Pollinator enhancement involves low-intensity burns from late fall to early spring.*
- *Carefully mow to avoid destruction of insect eggs, larvae and adults. Avoid mowing when flowers are blooming, except for targeted weed management. Mow after flowers are dead or dormant, which helps avoid destroying nesting bumblebees. Mow in patches over several years rather than mowing the site all at once.*
- *Herbicides should be applied in a way that minimizes destruction of larval hostplants and adult forage plants. Avoid broadcast spraying and pellet dispersal. Instead, spot-treat problem sites with a backpack sprayer or weed wipe.*
- *Insecticides should be selected for the least harmful formulation and application method. Dusts and microencapsulated insecticides are the most harmful to bees and aerial spraying is the most harmful method. Safer alternatives are sprayed solutions and large granules. Using ground applications and coarse sprays alleviate aerial spray drift.*
- *Roadside management can incorporate pollinator needs and contribute to habitat corridors, such as those needed by migrating monarchs. Using a mixture of native grasses and flowering plants as roadside cover provides wildlife habitat, weed and erosion control, reduced need for spraying and mowing and an aesthetically-enhanced area. As with other habitat types, select plants that are adapted to the site and area and have different and overlapping blooming times. Apply appropriate spraying and mowing strategies, particularly early in the planting's establishment.*

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 and Farmable Wetland Program. Many of the continuous CRP practices have additional payment incentives to protect sensitive lands like wetlands and highly erodible lands.

Another continuous CRP opportunity that has no limit on enrolled acres is the pollinator habitat initiative. This initiative is a fantastic way to add pheasant nesting and brood rearing habitat to land. It has a minimum size limit of 0.5 acres and no maximum acreage limit. Seed mixes may contain up to 25 percent native grasses, but must contain minimum of nine wild flower species, three of which must bloom during spring, mid-summer and late summer. There is a \$150/acre signing incentive payment offered with this initiative.

Grassland CRP is a new type of CRP. Expiring and expired CRP grassland as well as non-cropped native rangeland and pastureland are eligible. Contract length is 15 years and the rental rate will be up to 75 percent of the average county grazing lease rates. Cost-share will be available at 50 percent rate for fence and water development on enrolled acres. The grassland CRP sign-up is available from September 1, 2015 through November 20, 2015.

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 providing producers with another option in their land management decisions." ■



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