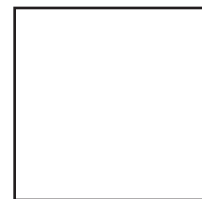




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# LANDOWNERS

*Matter*



## Assistance with Canada Goose Damage

Every year, South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) works with a large number of landowners across the eastern portion of the state to minimize crop damage caused by Canada geese. Canada goose management in South Dakota is a complex and adaptive process that includes careful consideration of the biological, social and political impacts. Eighty percent of land in South Dakota is privately owned. Sportsmen and women rely

heavily on these private lands for hunting opportunities and access. GFP understands that cooperative partnerships with private landowners are an essential component to Canada goose management and that private lands serve an important role regarding all wildlife management. It is because of these considerations that GFP operates such an active and comprehensive wildlife damage management program regarding Canada goose depredation.

GFP's Canada goose depredation program is a multi-faceted program designed to reduce or prevent crop damage caused by Canada geese. GFP utilizes a large number of non-lethal abatement techniques including permanent fence, temporary electric fence and various hazing techniques (i.e. propane cannons, cracker-shells, kites and flagging, and harassment). The most

**Assistance, continued on page 2**

### Assistance, continued from page 1

widely used program component is the construction of temporary electric fence along the edges of wetlands. This fence serves as an effective barrier to flightless Canada geese and unless a large number of birds puts pressure on the fence to gain access to growing crops, is very effective. Hazing techniques are also used to scare and haze the birds away from the damaged areas, but to be effective takes repeated and consistent efforts.

GFP also uses several lethal management techniques, authorized by a permit issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which allows GFP to destroy nests and GFP's subpermittees to kill Canada geese in areas where large concentrations of Canada geese are causing crop damage. By removing a small number of birds at a specific location, the pressure hazes the birds away from the immediate area and lowers the overall number of birds in a specific area. The ability to authorize landowners to remove a small number of Canada geese on areas where they are experiencing crop damage has increased social tolerance in many areas. Authorized landowners can have a tool in-hand that is easy to implement and is very effective.

Another management tool is providing cooperative funding to landowners who plant wheat or other small grains or native grasses as bufferstrips around wetland edges. These bufferstrips provide a protective band of taller vegetation which serves as a visual barrier around the wetland that can be effective at limiting Canada geese access to cropfields.

Landowners who plant wheat bufferstrips as a protective barrier around other crop types such as soybeans are eligible for up to \$4,000 of cost-share assistance to establish the bufferstrip. This assistance includes a \$40 per acre payment in addition to the average rental rate. Normal harvest practices are allowed. Native grass bufferstrips provide a barrier of tall grasses to protect crops and landowners that plant these bufferstrips receive annual payments ranging from 120 to 160 percent of the average rental rate as well as certain incentives for signing the contract.

Since 2000, GFP has spent more than \$5 million cooperatively working with landowners to reduce Canada goose damage to growing crops and is committed to working with landowners into the future to address these important issues.

Landowners that are interested in any of these programs or services should contact their local wildlife damage specialist or GFP office. (See back page for contact information.) ■

## GFP Issues Permits to Landowners



Each year, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service authorizes the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) the authority to permit landowners who have Canada goose damage the ability to remove small numbers of Canada geese, in an effort to reduce crop damage and haze Canada geese away from damage locations.

"We know Canada geese can cause significant damage to growing crops," said Keith Fisk, wildlife damage program administrator. "By allowing landowners the ability to protect their crops with an effective tool (i.e. lethal control), we hope to minimize the negative impacts of these birds."

For several years, GFP has authorized approximately 350 landowners in eastern South Dakota a permit to kill Canada geese at areas where crop damage is experienced. It is important to understand these permits are not a population reduction tool, but rather an effective hazing technique.

"During an average year, permitted landowners remove approximately 1,000 Canada geese," said Fisk. "This tool has successfully reduced crop damage in certain areas and at the same time has had no negative effect on the overall population." GFP law enforcement staff will also conduct compliance checks this year. To retain accountability with the use of these permits, it is imperative to have people following the provisions of the permit.

Landowners interested in obtaining a permit to shoot Canada geese causing crop damage are encouraged to contact their local GFP office. See back page for contact information. ■





# Wetland/Grassland Habitat Program: Cost Share Opportunities for Working Grasslands

The Wetland and Grassland Habitat Program focuses on working grasslands owned by producers with livestock operations throughout the state.

Private landowners have and will continue to serve as the stewards with the most influence on wildlife habitat across the state. GFP values landowners as essential partners in striving to meet goals to implement landscape-scale initiatives aimed at conserving the diversity and abundance of wildlife we all enjoy here.

To foster the partnership with private landowners, GFP's private lands programs have evolved to address specific habitat goals and to capitalize on opportunities to work cooperatively with grass-based livestock operations to better manage South Dakota's remaining grassland resources. The goal is to ensure long-term health of grasslands on private land for the benefit of ranchers, grassland-dependent wildlife and the public. In other words, to sustain healthy populations of a wide variety of grassland-dependent wildlife, some of which are experiencing significant population declines, we need profitable and sustainable grass-based livestock operations on the landscape to manage and improve South Dakota's remaining grasslands.

Four biologists deliver the Wetland and Grassland Habitat Program. The program has evolved into a diverse package of grass, grazing and wetland habitat management practices. (See program fact sheet, map and contact information on page 5.)

Cooperators sign a ten-year contract with GFP with the landowner retaining control of access to their property. Cost-share rates vary depending on the practice implemented. More detail regarding this program can be found on the Habitat Pays website at: [habitat.sd.gov/resources/workinggrassland.aspx](http://habitat.sd.gov/resources/workinggrassland.aspx).

If you have an interest in learning more, visit with a private land biologist or schedule a time when one can come out, look things over and discuss management needs and options. There might be things you can work on together to help meet long-term ranch management goals and make things better for wildlife. ■



# Trees, Shrubs and Woody Cover: A Landowners' Guide to Cost-Share Options

As the old saying goes, "The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago." If there is any truth in that saying, it is knowing trees and woody cover can take decades to develop and mature, so if you are considering adding a shelterbelt to your property it is better to get the ball rolling sooner rather than later. Over the past decade, countless acres of shelterbelts have been lost not only to agricultural expansion, but also to natural decay and degradation over time. If you are trying to decide if a new tree planting is right for you, or you are interested in renovating an older shelterbelt, below are some habitat hints to help you along the way.

Shelterbelts offer numerous benefits to both wildlife and people. Woody habitat plantings are most valuable to South Dakota's resident wildlife during the winter months, as a properly designed planting can provide both cover and thermal protection to wildlife at ground level. Shelterbelts that incorporate flowering shrubs and fruit trees also offer foraging opportunities for pollinators, such as hummingbirds, insects, bees, butterflies and even bats. To our passerine birds, such as robins, trees offer nesting sites to support and raise young every year. People can benefit greatly from shelterbelt plantings that help protect livestock and farmyards, help keep snow from drifting onto roadways and help to buffer wetlands, lakes and rivers that provide fishing, recreation and drinking water to many of our South Dakota towns.

While tree plantings come with all these benefits, they can also carry a hefty price tag. Not only does a landowner need to purchase the trees or shrubs, but there are planting costs, costs for weed control such as fabrics or chemicals and costs for maintaining the new shelterbelts, particularly during the first few years. Do not be deterred by costs though, as there are numerous cost-share opportunities available for landowners looking to establish shelterbelts on their properties.

The program with the highest level of cost-share for establishing shelterbelts is the Conservation Reserve Program, otherwise known as CRP. Many people are unaware that the same program that will cost-share a grass planting can also be used to cost-share tree plantings. The CRP tree programs are designed to reduce wind erosion on crop fields, protect farmyards and livestock, act as snow fences along roadways and act as buffer strips along riparian areas. Similar to CRP grassland plantings, landowners will receive an annual rental rate for their CRP tree acres, along with establishment cost-share which will sometimes cover 90 percent of the initial establishment

costs. While the CRP tree programs offer the most financial kickbacks to landowners, they have their limitations on where they can be utilized and where the trees must be located.

The next best cost-share option for landowners looking to establish shelterbelts is the Woody Habitat Program available through the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP). Through the Woody Habitat Program, landowners will receive a one-time payment to help cover the majority of the tree cost, planting cost and weed fabric costs. Since the GFP program is completely funded by the sale of hunting and fishing licenses, the program requirements are tailored toward wildlife benefits. As long as the proposed tree plans meet the GFP guidelines, funding is available on a first-come, first-served basis. Demand for the Woody Habitat Program has been high over the past few years, so much so that landowners interested in using this program for cost-share may need to delay their plantings for multiple years before more funding is available.

A couple more opportunities that offer cost-share to landowners for tree plantings are County Conservation Grants and Watershed District Grants. Both of these cost-share options are administered by local municipalities and program guidelines can vary from county to county or from district to district. Typically, these types of grants are often times the least restrictive of the options mentioned here. While these types of grants do not offer the financial benefits of some of the other programs mentioned, their typical cost-share rates are right around 50 percent, which is still very significant and will help to make your tree planting much more affordable.

With all the different programs available for cost-sharing your shelterbelt planting, it is tough to know where to start. A great way to learn more about tree, shrub and shelterbelt programs is to visit the Habitat Pays website at [habitat.sd.gov](http://habitat.sd.gov). The website offers information about other habitat programs as well, along with landowner testimonials and up-to-date news articles about the latest habitat information. Visit the Habitat Advisors page to find contact information for a biologist near you who can help you design and plan your next shelterbelt planting. Every county in the state has a County Conservation District that specializes in tree plantings services and most can be reached by contacting your local NRCS/FSA office.

If the old saying is true, that "The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago," what are you waiting for? Contact a biologist today and get started on your next shelterbelt planting! ■



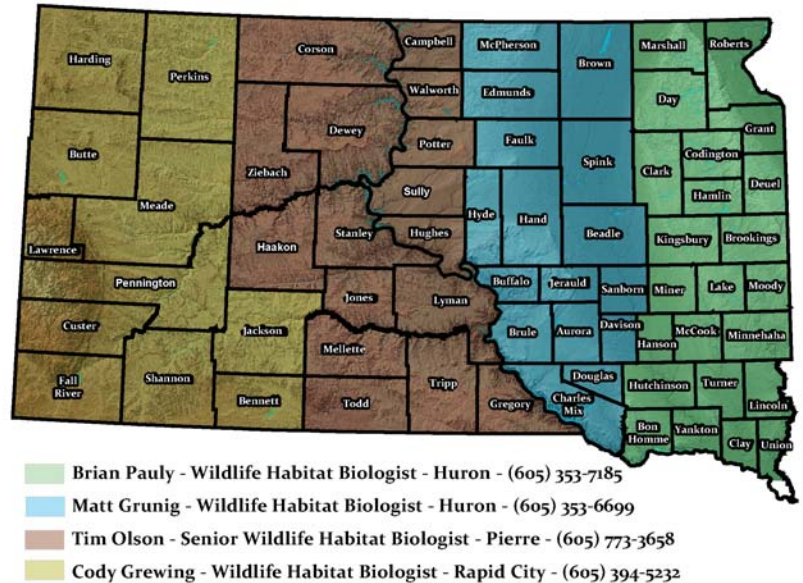


# Private Lands Wetland and Grassland Habitat Program

The Private Lands Wetland and Grassland Habitat Program is a program to implement conservation practices that benefit breeding waterfowl and other wetland or grassland dependent wildlife by assisting producers with projects on working grasslands.

Wetland and Grassland Program staff work with landowners and other conservation partners to implement wetland and grassland conservation practices that will benefit wildlife while meeting the needs of landowners. In addition to technical assistance, the Wetland and Grassland Habitat Program offers a variety of cost-share options for private landowners.

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks  
Private Lands Biologists



## Practices eligible for cost share include:



*For more information on programs and eligibility please contact the biologist in your area.*

# Habitat Workshop Presentations Available Online

The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) has a standing practice of conducting regional open house meetings to foster communication with residents, landowners and sportsmen and women of this state.

Historically, these meetings have allowed GFP staff to meet one-on-one with area stakeholders and discuss game management, fisheries, habitat and predator issues. They are effective, but can be time-consuming for both staff and constituents.

With the push to assist landowners to increase the quantity and quality of habitat on their lands, open house meetings this past spring focused on habitat programs.

In particular, GFP employees in the southeast created "Habitat University." These four open house workshops were designed to provide landowners with practical and technical information on how to create winter cover, food plots, native grass seedings and other topics.

Speakers weren't just GFP employees. As with the Habitat Pays website, *habitat.sd.gov*, the idea is to bring as much habitat knowledge to the table. Speakers from the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Pheasants Forever, the Minnehaha Conservation District and others provided insight on habitat.

"Habitat University" was not the only game in town. Other open houses across the state had habitat workshops at the front and center.

GFP employees from the northeast conducted habitat programming as well. Notably, regional GFP habitat program manager, Chris Goldade, held an extensive habitat presentation in Redfield. Goldade, GFP staff and other partners had presentations on wetland restoration, NRCS options, basic habitat needs, food plots and grass plantings and information on the Habitat Pays website.

Knowing that not every interested landowner could make these workshops, some of these presentations were recorded and can be found on the Habitat Pays website at: [habitat.sd.gov/workshops/previous-workshops.aspx](http://habitat.sd.gov/workshops/previous-workshops.aspx). Look for more videos to be showcased online in the near future.

If you have any questions about improving habitat on your land, private lands programs, food plots or other habitat questions, visit [habitat.sd.gov](http://habitat.sd.gov). It's your one-stop-shop for your habitat questions and needs. ■





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	*Josh Brainard	605.394.6724
	Adam Geigle	605.394.6022
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	*Jeremy Roe	605.362.2712
	Jared Hill	605.362.2759
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Spearsfish	*Brian Meiers	605.642.6019
	*Mike Apland	605.642.6057
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Vermillion	Tony Stokley	605.356.9491
Wall	Vacant	605.279.2078
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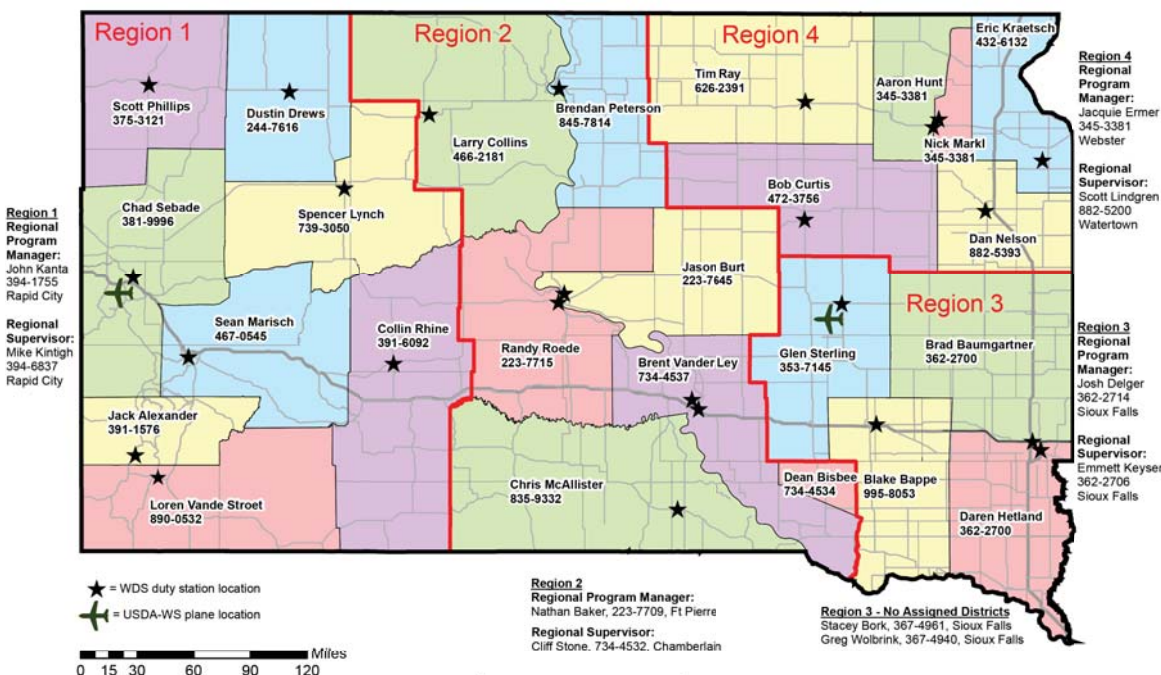
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