

SOUTH DAKOTA RIPARIAN BUFFER INITIATIVE (RBI)

TANNER CLAUSEN | AG AND NATURAL RESOURCES (DANR)

The Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources' (DANR) Riparian Buffer Initiative works to improve water quality by increasing the use of riparian buffers and animal waste management systems (AWMS) on waterbodies across South Dakota. Initially started in 2021, the initiative continues to build momentum both on the ground and with policy makers and, to date, more than \$18 million has been dedicated to the program.

Riparian buffers, vegetated areas adjacent to streams, lakes and other waterbodies, improve water quality by filtering pollutants, capturing nutrients before they enter waterways, and stabilize shorelines which reduce erosion from runoff and wind and wave action. They also protect overall ecological health of aquatic resources. Riparian buffers are beneficial to not only fish and wildlife populations but also agricultural production through additional forage for livestock and an increased return on investment when installed on marginal cropland acres.

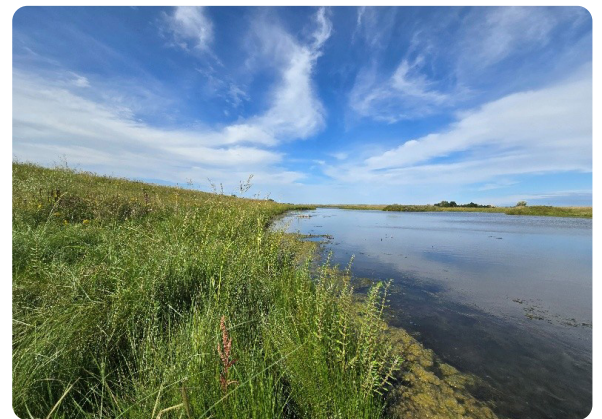
Eligible buffers must be 50–120 feet wide, maintain at least four inches of cover, and cannot be mowed or harvested between May 1–August 1. Grazing is restricted between May 1–September 30. Producers enrolled in RBI receive a direct payment of 250% of the county National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) rental rate to install and maintain buffers. RBI cost-share assistance includes 75% for alternative water development, 100% of fencing material to exclude cattle from enrolled pasture, and 100% for grass seed.

DANR is also partnering with the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks to provide an additional incentive for buffers enrolled in CRP or CREP, with payments equal to 120% of the federal weighted average soil rental rate. For example, if the CRP weighted average soil rental rate is \$100/acre for a 10-year contract, CREP would add another \$31-34/acre to that rental rate for public hunting & fishing access and RBI would add a \$1,200/acre one-time payment for a total combined average rental rate of \$251-254/ac on the buffer acreage. CRP offers additional incentives for water quality practices, so this example could end up averaging over \$300/ac/year.

The AWMS program provides cost-share for systems that help small and medium sized animal feeding operations (AFOs) manage waste. Systems must meet Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) specifications



September 1, 2023



September 1, 2024

Photos by: Prairie Coteau Watershed Project taken on Blue Dog Lake

and include a comprehensive nutrient management plan. Priority is given to operations within one mile of a qualifying stream or lake, though others may be considered. Producers must work with NRCS for AWMS construction and design. Payments are \$250 per animal unit, up to \$250,000 per system, and cost-share may also support feedlot relocation and reclamation when necessary to improve water quality.

If you would like more information about the South Dakota Riparian Buffer Initiative, please visit: danr.sd.gov/Conservation/WatershedProtection/RiparianBuffer.aspx

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