

Private Lands Habitat Program

Guide to Woody Habitat

The goal of the GFP woody habitat practice is to establish large woody plantings that aid wildlife populations by providing food and cover resources. Since most resident wildlife lives on the ground, shrubs and mid-sized trees are required for wildlife shelterbelts and shrub clump plantings to maximize wildlife benefits.

Applications consist of sending a tree plan (including landowner contact information) and color aerial photograph noting the project location to a GFP private lands habitat biologist listed on the bottom of this flyer by **November 1** for planning and ensuring tree species availability. If applications do not meet annual planting objectives, this deadline may be extended. Landowners enrolled in this program retain access control to their property but are required to allow some type of reasonable free hunting access.

Shelterbelt plantings:

- New plantings must be a minimum of 8 rows wide and at least 1 acre in size.
- One row of tall trees may be included in the center of an 8-row planting. For each additional row added beyond 8 rows, 1 additional row of tall trees can be added to the center of the belt.
- Additional rows can be added to an existing shelterbelt provided that the entire shelterbelt (existing and new rows) meets the above criteria.

Cost Share:

- GFP will reimburse landowners for 75% of costs incurred for planting woody habitat up to \$20,000.
- 90% of landowner costs will be reimbursed for additional rows added onto existing or new CRP tree plantings to meet or exceed the GFP woody habitat 8-row minimum requirement.
- 100% of landowner costs will be reimbursed if the landowner's property is enrolled into a public hunting access program for 5 or more years at the time of planting. Cancellation of the access contract prior to its expiration date will require the landowner to reimburse GFP any added initial project cost share provided as an access incentive.
- 75% of landowner costs will be reimbursed for shelterbelt renovations and replanting up to \$30,000. Eligible expenses include heavy equipment contractual services to remove the old belt along with cost of materials and planting of the new belt. The replanted shelterbelt must meet the design requirements of the woody habitat shelterbelt program.
- \$5,000 of the \$20,000 or \$25,000 maximums can be used for cost share for temporary deer fencing protection.
- GFP will not provide cost-share on any trees that the landowner is receiving cost share from another entity or program.



Riparian shrub clump plantings:

- Plantings allowed within the riparian area.
- New plantings must be between ¼ and 2 acres in size.
- Only shrub and mid-sized species are allowed.
- Spacing between shrubs and mid-sized trees should be 3 to 5 feet.
- Plantings will follow NRCS standard designs (Clumpy, Star, Expanding).
- Species planted must be native to South Dakota.
- Riparian sites consisting of native sod are not excluded from this practice.

Cost share:

- GFP will reimburse landowners for 75% of cost incurred for planting up to \$20,000.
- 100% of landowner costs will be reimbursed if the landowner's property is enrolled into a public hunting access program for 5 or more years at the time of planting. Cancellation of the access contract prior to its expiration date will require the landowner to reimburse GFP any added initial project cost share provided as an access incentive.

Additional program guidelines:

- Eastern Red Cedars cannot be included in plantings when native grassland tracts of 80 acres or larger are within a ¼ mile of the planting, unless Eastern Red Cedars are present on the landscape as part of a tree planting directly between the new tree planting and the native grassland tract.
- Tree plantings shall not occur within 100 yards of an occupied dwelling or a site with the potential to soon be occupied.
- Colorado Blue Spruce, Russian Olive, Siberian Elm and Green Ash are not eligible for GFP cost-share.
- Lands converted by the current owner from native sod to cropland in the previous 5 years are not eligible.
- Eligible costs include the following: trees, shrubs, weed barrier fabric, tree tubes, native grass seed between rows, planting, and installation. Site preparation costs (disking, tilling, etc.) are not eligible for GFP cost-share.
- Payment will be issued following project completion and submission of receipts to GFP by the landowner.
- Contracts are 15 years in length. Removal of the woody habitat planting prior to 15 years after the date of planting requires the landowner to fully reimburse GFP all cost-share provided for the project.
- All plantings are subject to approval by GFP.

Eligible shrub and tree species include, but are not limited to:

Shrubs: Buffaloberry, Chokeberries, Currants, Caragana, Cotoneasters, Dogwoods, Elderberry, Gooseberry, Juneberry, Lilac, Mongolian Cherry, Nanking Cherry, Nannyberry, Plums, Sandbar Willow, Heartleaf Willow, Sea-buckthorn, Silverberry, Sumacs, Western Sandcherry, American Highbush Cranberry

Mid-Sized Trees: Amur Maple, Apricot, Aspen, Black Walnut, Buckeye, Cedars, Chokecherry, Crabapples, Hawthorns, Hazelnut, Junipers, Black Hills Spruce, Laurel Willow, Peachleaf Willow, Littleleaf Linden, Mountain-ash, Mulberry, Oaks, Pears, Pin Cherry

Tall Trees (1 row allowed in center of an 8-row belt, for each additional row added to the belt an additional tall tree row may be added to the center to maximize wind diversion and snow catching): American Linden, Black Cherry, Boxelder, Golden Willow, Hackberry, Honey Locust, Pines, Silver Maple, White Willow, Cottonwood.



Hardwood release program (Black Hills & Native Hardwood Forests Statewide)

- 75% cost share for mastication or hand removal of undesirable species competing with desired hardwood deciduous tree species.
- \$600 maximum cost share per acre
- Maximum cost share of \$15,000 per landowner per year.
- Project size must be ½ acre or larger in size.
- Deciduous tree species being released include – oak, aspen, willow, cottonwood, and walnut. Other tree and shrub species will be allowed with prior approval.
- Eligible for \$2,000 in materials for protective fencing or on larger tracts or riparian areas GFP can provide materials with maximums determined by fence design for livestock exclusion.
- 50% cost share up to \$3.50/ft for specialized protective fencing to exclude elk and other wildlife species from hardwood release sites to reduce browsing of targeted hardwood species
- Contracts are 15 years in length.
- An agreed upon forest management plan for the project site will accompany the contract that includes the following -
 - Tree removal method – mastication, hinge cutting, cut and stack, chop and drop
 - Browse protection for desired tree species
 - Ongoing maintenance required by the landowner to keep the site clear of undesirable woody species
- Commercial timber sales may not be part of the project however this program may be used following timber harvest to make additional habitat improvements.
- All hardwood release projects are subject to GFP approval.

Questions and applications should be submitted to your local Private Lands Habitat Biologist.

Custer: Tom Miklos - 605-416-4080
Hot Springs: Ben Pucket - 605-786-8144
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