

PLACE TO ENJOY DURING RETIREMENT

LUCAS ZILVERBERG | SOUTH DAKOTA GAME, FISH AND PARKS

A Purple Heart, five tours in the military, and a man passionate about conservation, we have a lot to be thankful for when

we talk about Larry Tentinger. I started working with Larry this spring (2023) after he purchased 90 acres of land he wanted to manage for the wildlife. Part of the 90 acres was already in a wetland easement, but he had 25 acres that remained cropland. Larry wanted to seed those 25 acres back to native prairie and was eager to make the planting successful. After meeting and working with Larry, we decided to go above and beyond the minimum requirements for a grassland planting through South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP). The seed mix contained 36 species, of which eight were grasses and 28 were flowering forbs. Some grasses and forbs included were big bluestem, prairie dropseed, sideoats grama, butterfly milkweed, Illinois tick trefoil, and rattlesnake master. Seed mixes can be difficult to design especially when the price of seed is factored in, so being able to plant more than the minimum was already a step up for most restoration

scenarios. The seed mix was designed for pollinators, upland game birds, and nesting sites for waterfowl.

This year has been like the previous two years, where we have not received much precipitation. However, the new seeding received a critical 1-2 inches of rain almost immediately after the seeds were planted, and the native plants thrived this summer. Firstyear plantings can be concerning for landowners, as they tend to have a lot of annual weeds fill the vacant space until the native-planted species can establish. Inevitably, when you plant native prairie mixtures, annual weeds such as foxtail, ragweed, and horseweed will likely show up. Depending on the weed pressure, mowing 1-3 times might be a good option the first summer, but if the weeds are not too competitive, then they can be left alone. The second year will look more diversified, but the prairie might still need one mowing. By the third year, the prairie should start to look filled in and have few weeds. I was on site twice this summer, and the plants looked great; they have a good foothold and will fill in nicely the next few years.





SUCCESS STORIES

FROM THE FIELD



Figure 2. Larry's uniforms from his five tours in the military.

The new planting will pair nicely with the existing wetlands on the property. There is also a Game Production Area (GPA) nearby that this property will complement well by providing a corridor for wildlife to travel. Providing habitat on private lands is critical for ensuring healthy wildlife populations and continuing to offer opportunities to carry on the hunting heritage in South Dakota. Often, habitat on private lands will complement habitat found on public lands and vice versa. As wildlife get pressured by hunters on one property, they have nearby habitat to travel to for cover. These types of projects on private land are essential to the state of South Dakota to help wildlife flourish.

Larry calls Sioux Falls home, but he has been all over the world and seen many things that most people will never experience in their lives. Now, he also owns 90 acres, which will be a place for him and his family to enjoy during his retirement. He truly cares about the land and wants what is best for the pollinators and other wildlife that reside on and near his place. Larry is building a small cabin on site and wants to enjoy the views he has worked hard to obtain. Larry has quite a story to tell, and he has been a treat to work with this past year. I will continue to check on Larry's planting and make sure it looks good. I also want to thank Larry for everything he has done for the USA!

UILDING WILDLIFE HABITAT AND DROUGHT RESILIENCY IN GRAZING SYSTEMS

BEN PUCKET | SOUTH DAKOTA GAME, FISH AND PARKS

There are few things that are certain when ranching in Western South Dakota. An exception is the ever-changing weather and the threat of drought. The past three years of drought left many ranchers with dry dams and little forage available for livestock and wildlife. Even though this year brought relief for many in the western part of the state, the threat of drought is always present. However, the way landowners are managing drought is ever evolving. Rotational grazing can have many benefits when the system is well thought out and customized to the landowner's operation. By adding cross fencing and water distribution, landowners can change how long and at what time of year a pasture is grazed. This allows the opportunity for each pasture to receive deferred grazing throughout the critical growing season. Landowners can also implement a rest period for each pasture in a rest rotation grazing system. By resting pastures and deferring grazing, plants are given time to recover and build vigor and resiliency for when drought returns. Using these grazing methods, landowners create habitat for a variety of wildlife with varied plant structure and composition, often referred to has heterogeneity.

Careful planning and implementation of a grazing plan allows a landowner to monitor the effects of the plan and adapt to the changes that occur on the landscape. While rotational grazing is nothing new, the technology, infrastructure, and knowledge of land management has changed in the last twenty years. Solar wells are replacing windmills, HDPE pipe allows pipelines to expand to the outer reaches of properties, and a new variety of fencing materials enables landowners to increase grazing rotation and build drought resistance into their operations like never before. Nonetheless, implementing rotational grazing on the landscape can prove challenging especially with the ever-increasing cost of materials and labor. South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) partners with landowners and works to offset the costs of fencing, water infrastructure, and habitat improvements.

Russell Nathan is a rancher who has partnered with GFP to increase the rotational capabilities and drought resilience of his operation. Russ has removed woven wire, added wildlife friendly cross-fences, and developed pipelines and watering points. These changes increase his ability to manage his land in a way that benefits the land, his livestock, and wildlife. Russ has also utilized the Second Century Working Lands Habitat Program to take crop ground and convert it back to grassland. The habitat his land provides is home to grouse, deer, antelope, and many grassland songbirds. Partnering with Russ and his family ensures that there will be wildlife, healthy pastures for livestock, and a bright future for the next generation of hunters and ranchers.



Second Century Grass Planting



Old woven wire fence materials



Water tank and new cross fence installed

SECOND CENTURY WORKING LANDS HABITAT PROGRAM

As the inaugural habitat program under Governor Noem's Second Century Initiative, administered by the Second Century Habitat Fund, a 501(c)(3), it will provide a working lands habitat alternative to cropping marginal land. The focus of this program is to enroll marginal cropland such as saline and moist soils, field edges, other less productive soil types, or areas producers want to manage as wildlife habitat for 5 to 10 years and seed it to a perennial grass and forb mix that can be hayed and grazed.



MARGINAL

CROPLAND

PAYMENT

- » One-time payment of \$150/acre (5 year) or \$450/acre (10 year) for West River Counties and \$250/acre (5 year) or \$750/acre (10 year) for East River Counties (and Tripp, Lyman, and Gregory)
- » Seed provided for free.

ELIGIBILITY

- » All cropland in South Dakota is eligible.
- » Minimum size per planting is 5 acres.
- » Maximum area enrolled per participant is 160 acres.
- » Participants agree not to charge any person or entity any fee or payment for hunting access to any property under their ownership or control. A person who has a commercial fee hunting establishment may not participate.

SEED AND PLANTING

- » Upon execution of the agreement, free seed will be shipped directly to participants.
- » Seed mixes provided will consist of grasses and forbs that provide highquality ground-nesting bird habitat and forage for livestock.
- » Participants will be responsible for seedbed preparation, planting, and weed control during establishment.
- » Grass or no-till drills are available through most local Conservation Districts. Pheasants Forever or South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks habitat biologists are available to provide technical assistance.

ACCESS

- » Hunting access will be by landowner permission.
- » Landowners who enroll land in South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks Walk-In Area program will receive a one-time, up-front incentive of \$10 per acre/ year for the enrolled acres.

HAYING AND GRAZING

- » No haying or grazing is allowed until after August 1 of the second growing season.
- » Between August 1 and March 1, enrollee can hay 50% of the acres each year or the entire acreage every other year.

MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS TO MAXIMIZE HABITAT VALUE

- Plant adjacent to or near existing habitat such as wetlands, woody habitat, or food plots.
- » Hay at 8" or higher to maintain nesting habitat on hayed acres.





FOR MORE INFORMATION OR QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT

AMY BLACKSTONE | 605.380.4299 OR AMYEBLACKSTONE@HOTMAIL.COM

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL HABITAT ADVISOR AT HABITAT.SD.GOV/ADVISORS TO SIGN UP

SOUTH DAKOTA RIPARIAN BUFFER INITIATIVE (RBI)

TANNER CLAUSEN | SD DEPARTMENT OF AG AND NATURAL RESOURCES

The Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources' (DANR) Riparian Buffer Initiative is aimed to improve water quality through increased use of riparian buffers and animal waste management systems (AWMS) in the Big Sioux River Watershed and impaired waterbodies across South Dakota. Riparian buffers, vegetated areas adjacent to streams and lakes, are an effective conservation practice filtering out pollutants and capturing nutrients before they enter waterbodies.

Producers who enroll in RBI within the Big Sioux River Watershed will receive a direct payment of 250 percent of the county National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) rental rate to install and maintain buffers on eligible lands. Buffers must be a minimum of 50-feet wide and have a maximum average width of 120 feet, may not be harvested or mowed between May 1 and August 1, may not be grazed between May 1 and September 30, and must maintain a minimum of four inches of cover. In addition, DANR is partnering with South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) to add an extra incentive for riparian buffers in areas participating in Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) contracts. The RBI payment on eligible acres will be 120 percent of the federal weighted average soil rental rate.

RBI buffers outside of the Big Sioux River Watershed will have payments based on 100 percent



of the CRP rental rate for cropland and pastureland. Cost-share on all RBI buffers will be 75 percent for alternative water, 100 percent of fencing material excluding cattle form enrolled pasture, and 100 percent for grass seed.

The new Big Sioux River AWMS program will offer cost share for the construction of AWMS to help small- and medium-sized animal feeding operations effectively manage wastes. All systems that receive funds must be built to Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) specifications, have a comprehensive nutrient management plan developed, and be located within the Big Sioux River Watershed. Priority will be given to Animal Feeding Operations within one mile or less of a qualifying

stream or lake; however, facilities outside of one mile may be considered for funding. Producers must work with NRCS for construction and design of AWMS. RBI payments will be based on current carrying capacity with a payment of \$250 per animal unit up to \$250,000 per system. Cost share is available for expenses associated with feedlot relocation and reclamation if a producer is required to relocate a facility to improve water quality.

If you would like more information about one of these programs, please visit *danr.sd.gov/Conservation/WatershedProtection/RiparianBuffer.aspx*



WILDLIFE HABITAT ON PRIVATE LAND

THROUGH NRCS'S ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVE PROGRAM (EQIP)

MARK NORTON | HUNTING ACCESS AND FARM BILL COORDINATOR, GFP





The photo on the right shows the same field after the impacted portion of the field has been planted to salt-tolerant perennial vegetation.

Reserve Program (CRP) because of the undeniable habitat it provides for wildlife in South Dakota, but there are other programs that offer cost-share and incentives to private landowners to help establish and manage wildlife habitat on their farms and ranches. One program that is receiving significant increases in funding to the tune of tens of millions of dollars over the next couple of years in South Dakota is the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). EQIP is well known as a working lands program providing incentives to implement environmentally beneficial practices on farms and ranches, but many may not know that at least ten percent of its funding is required to be spent on wildlife habitat projects.

It is estimated that over eight million acres of cropland in South Dakota have reduced productivity because of salt-impacted soils. Research has shown that one of the best ways to restore the productivity of those salt-impacted soils is to plant them to salt-tolerant, perennial vegetation. The above photo on the left shows a before picture of a

cropland field impacted by saline or sodic soils where not much is growing. The photo on the right shows the same field after the impacted portion of the field has been planted to salt-tolerant perennial vegetation. One EQIP practice that establishes perennial grassland cover on marginal cropland is Salinity and Sodic Soil Management. Participants can receive cost-share to seed these acres to grassland and a payment for management during the first three growing seasons to make sure it gets established. After establishment, these grassland acres can be hayed or grazed according to a management plan. This practice can be a great way to improve the productivity of your cropland while also adding wildlife habitat to your operation.

EQIP also provides financial incentives for maintaining wetlands in cropland, planting trees, removing invading brush from pastureland, and planting cropland back to grassland. These are all great practices that provide valuable habitat for wildlife. If you would like to learn more about how you can improve wildlife habitat on your land, contact your local NRCS office or habitat advisor.

SOUTH DAKOTA GAME, FISH AND PARKS PRIVATE LANDS HABITAT PROGRAM

The goal of GFP's Private Lands Habitat Program is to help landowners establish, restore, or manage habitat on private land to enhance reproduction, recruitment, and survival of wildlife. Several program options are available to support management practices that emphasize healthy working grasslands. All projects are subject to approval by a GFP private lands habitat biologist. Cooperators must allow some amount of reasonable public hunting.

FOOD PLOTS

- » Food plots must remain unharvested/standing through March 15.
- » Annual payment of \$20 per acre for food plot acres (\$80/acre for food plots enrolled in a public hunting access program).
- » Free food plot seed is available from GFP each spring (corn, sorghum, brood mix, big game mix).
- » Maximum of 20 acres per quarter section and unlimited total acres per landowner.

WOODY HABITAT

- » Shelterbelt plantings
- » Shelterbelt renovations
- » Riparian shrub clump plantings
- » Hardwood release program

GRASSLAND ESTABLISHMENT

- » Native grass and forb seed mixes are the priority and plantings must be at least 10 acres.
- » Landowners are reimbursed 100 percent up to a maximum of \$125/acre for seed costs.
- » Cost-share is NOT available on CRP or WRP plantings or hay land.
- » Additional incentives available if plantings are enrolled into public hunting access program.

BROOD/POLLINATOR PLOTS

- » Designed to provide high-quality, native perennial habitat for broods and pollinators.
- » Landowners are reimbursed 100 percent up to a maximum of \$150/acre for seed costs.
- » Individual plantings must be a minimum of 2 acres and a maximum of 9 acres.

GRASSLAND/GRAZING MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- » To enhance grazing management opportunities and plant community health on working grasslands
- » Cost-shared practices include:
 - Perimeter and cross fence
 - Woven-wire fence replacement in pronghorn range (wildlife friendly fence design)
 - Water development stock tanks, pipeline, rural water hook-ups, wells, solar pump units
 - Multi-purpose stock/wildlife impoundments
 - Wetland restorations
 - Grassland establishment
 - Riparian pastures
 - Habitat exclusion fencing

RIPARIAN HABITAT ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

- » One-time rental payment of 75 percent per year of the county NASS rate for pasture (10-year contract).
- » Cost share livestock exclusion and alternative water sources.
- » Minimum width 35 feet and maximum width of 240 feet.

CONTACT A GFP PRIVATE LANDS HABITAT BIOLOGIST

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Learn more: habitat.sd.gov

SOUTH DAKOTA GAME, FISH, AND PARKS WOODY HABITAT PROGRAM

ERIC MAGEDANZ | SOUTH DAKOTA GAME, FISH AND PARKS

I think it's a safe to say most people shudder to think about the impending snowstorms and accompanying brutal northerly winds that are just around the corner. Unless, of course, you are like me and enjoy sitting on a bucket staring at a hole in the ice.

Undoubtedly, South Dakota's winters can be challenging, especially for our state's resident wildlife that must endure strenuous winter weather events. Fortunately, there are options for landowners who have the need and desire to establish valuable winter cover for wildlife. One option is South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks' (GFP) woody habitat program. The purpose of this program is to provide cost-share assistance to landowners to install high-quality, woody habitat plantings to enhance wildlife survival in areas where quality winter habitat may be deficient. In return for establishing woody cover, landowners can receive 75, 90, or 100 percent cost share for installation costs depending on if the planting is a traditional woody habitat planting (75%), enhances a CRP field windbreak (90%), or is enrolled into a public hunting program for a minimum of five years (100%).

A fundamental component of the woody habitat program is identifying quality plantings. Plantings comprised of low growing, dense species of shrubs and mid-sized trees are important in reducing wind velocity and providing superior predator avoidance cover.





Furthermore, a minimum size of at least one acre and eight rows must be planted to ensure plantings provide habitat during the harshest of winters where most other shelterbelts become inundated with snow. Woody habitat that doesn't meet these requirements not only can result in lower winter survival but can also negatively influence body condition of hen pheasants entering the breeding season. Reduced body condition can result in smaller clutch sizes and even lower hen survival during spring and summer breeding activities.

There are many different types of tree species available, but it's important to select species appropriate for your site. Soils and moisture can vary greatly around the state and selecting a species that will grow well is an important first



step to a successful planting. In addition, it's important to select native tree species, species that produce fruits or nuts, and lastly to diversify your planting.

The location of a tree planting is also an important consideration. Plantings that are in the middle of grassland can fragment nesting habitat into smaller blocks. This can increase the probability a predator will encounter a nest and destroy it. Some species of upland nesting birds, both game and nongame, may even avoid nesting near these fragmentated areas altogether. To preserve the integrity of native prairie and large grassland complexes, placement of woody cover should be focused near existing edges in areas that have a cropping history. If possible, woody habitat plantings should also be in close proximity to a winter food source to prevent pheasants and other wildlife from expending valuable energy traveling to forage and to reduce their exposure to predators and the winter elements. Plantings should also consider prevailing winds and be placed in a manner that provides the best protection.

Considering these few basic guidelines will ensure woody habitat plantings are as beneficial as possible for the greatest diversity of wildlife for generations to come. To learn more about GFP's woody habitat program, visit *habitat.sd.gov* to locate a habitat advisor near you.

PREPARE YOUR STORED FEED AND PROPERTY FOR A HARD WINTER

JULIE LINDSTROM | SOUTH DAKOTA GAME, FISH AND PARKS



For many South Dakotans, it seemed like the winter of 2022-2023 would never end. Persistent snow cover and cold temperatures resulted in severe conditions across the state. While people were struggling to clear paths through tunnels of snow to get to work, school, or to feed livestock, South Dakota's wildlife were also struggling. For animals like deer and antelope that are approximately 2.5-3 feet tall at the shoulder, it became difficult to find food under 30-40 inches of snow. Snow also filled in wetlands and shelterbelts that typically would have provided thermal cover and defense from the wind and cold.

During the winter, cold weather and deep snow can cause deer to congregate in large herds searching for food and cover. Last winter, the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Wildlife Damage Management team handled more than 550 requests for service from producers who were experiencing deer damage to stored livestock feed. For the GFP team this meant all-handson deck, where staff from all sections assisted with deer depredation. Most requests were handled with loans of steel fence panels, protective netting, secure covers, and short-stop feed stations which lured deer away from the landowners stored livestock feed. As we all prepare for the upcoming winter, there are several best management practices that can help producers reduce the amount of damage that deer can cause to livestock feed and other property.

» Store distiller's grain where it can be protected on all sides such as in an enclosed shed.

- » Stack hay bales in an arrangement that is more easily protected by fence, rather than having bales scattered in different areas.
- » Avoid storing bales near areas that are typically used by deer, such as shelterbelts, CRP or food plots.
- » Stack round bales in a row, stood on their flat end, and top them with another row of round bales which are laid on their curved sides (*see photo on next page*). This allows moisture to run over the top and down the sides but protects the bottom row of plastic-wrapped bales from deer.
- » Place feed in the middle of the stacking area and place other bales of corn or bean stalks, grass hay, forage sorghum/sudan grass or straw around the exterior as a barrier. These bales can also be used around silage piles, piles of grain, and other feeds. Avoid stacking small grain bales (i.e., oat, wheat, barley, and rye baled with heads on) on the exterior, as they are attractive for deer. Stack the barrier bales on at least three sides of the quality feed reduces the need for fencing, and if placed on the north and west sides the barrier also helps reduce drifting snow.

Contact your local Wildlife Damage Specialist for more valuable tips on reducing damage to stored livestock feed caused by deer.

Hunting is one of the best tools for managing deer populations. The Wildlife Damage Management Program is funded by sportsmen and sportswomen's dollars. Producers experiencing deer depredation are encouraged to allow hunting on their properties. Several programs exist which pay landowners for hunting access. Walk-in Areas, Conservation Reserve Enhancement Programs (CREP), Controlled Hunting Access Program (CHAP), and COOP Management Areas are privately owned acres leased for public hunting access by GFP.

Last winter's severe weather reinforced the fact that providing critical habitat is crucially important. Good winter cover and food availability are the primary factors affecting survival and animal health leading into the spring. To provide the most benefit to wildlife, winter cover and food should near each other. For example, plant a three to 15-acre food plot next to some high-quality thermal cover such as an 8-row or sider shelterbelt or cattail slough.

Wildlife food plots and permanent thermal cover are great ways of keeping wildlife in specific areas and away from stored feed. Several state and federal programs exist to assist landowners with designing and planting wildlife habitat. For example, GFP offers free food plot seed corn, sorghum seed, and brood mix to landowners and pays \$20/acre on food plots that are one to twenty acres in size. If the landowner signs the land into a "Walk-In-Area," which allows public hunting, payments are then \$80/acre. Hunting is one of the best tools for reducing deer problems in areas where they are often abundant.

GFP also offers a Woody Habitat Program to assist landowners with the costs of planting shelterbelts large enough to provide good wildlife food and cover. Wide shelterbelts provide safety for bedding, traveling, and browsing especially during the challenging winter months. The woody habitat planting must be at least eight rows wide and one acre in size to meet the basic requirements for the program. During challenging winters shelterbelts that have less than eight rows tend to get filled with snow and do not provide adequate

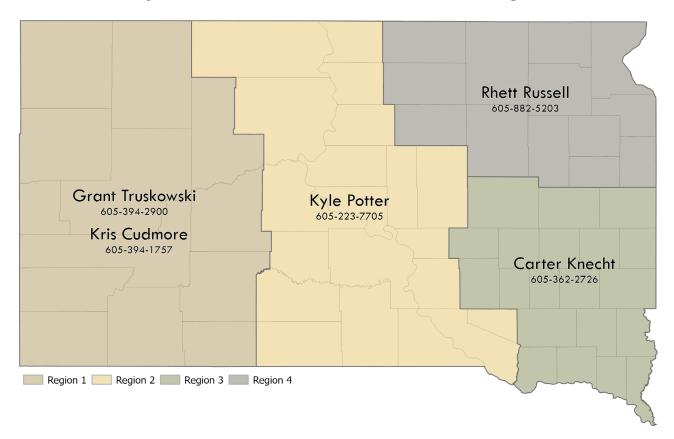




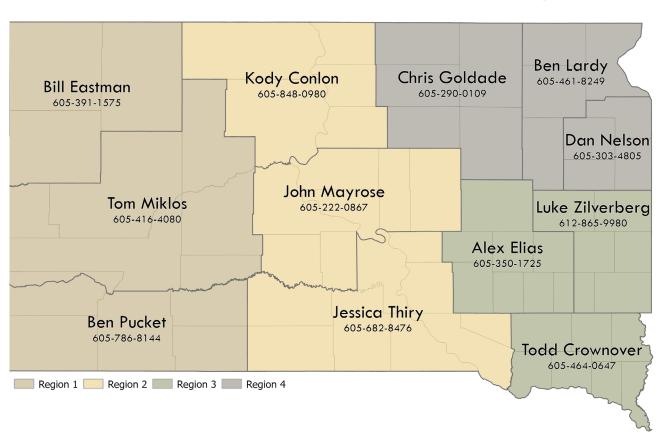
thermal cover. GFP will reimburse landowners for 75 percent of costs incurred for planting woody habitat up to \$20,000. One hundred percent of the landowner costs will be reimbursed if the landowner's property is enrolled into a public hunting access program for five or more years at the time of planting.

If you are interested in learning more about these habitat programs, contact the Private Lands Habitat Biologist in your area.

Aquatic Habitat and Access Biologists



Private Lands Habitat and Access Biologists



NEW STAFF SHOWCASE



CARTER
KNECHT is
originally from
Pierre, South
Dakota. He
graduated from
South Dakota
State University

in 2023 with a degree in Natural Resources Law Enforcement. He has always been passionate about natural resource conservation. His new position as an Aquatic Habitat and Access Biologist gives him the opportunity to work with landowners who have an interest in creating or improving aquatic habitat, as well as prioritizing quality water access. Carter works out of the SIOUX FALLS office and is available to landowners throughout southeast South Dakota.



JESSICA THIRY
is orignally
from Charles
Mix County
and grew up
hunting, fishing,
camping, and
spending time

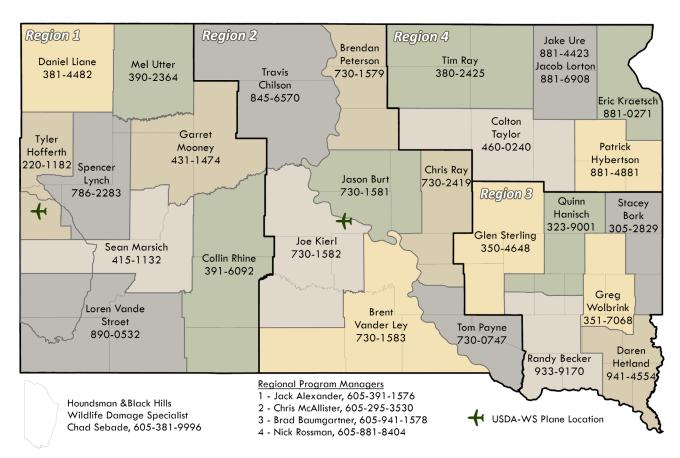
outdoors with her family. This instilled in her a passion for conservation management. She graduated from SDSU with a B.S. in Wildlife and Fisheries Science. Jessica is not new to GFP. She has worked as a campground attendant, a fisheries intern in Chamberlain, and most recently was the secretary in the Chamberlain office. Jessica is based out of the **CHAMBERLAIN** office. She resides in Oacoma with her husband and two dogs, Nala and River.



JACOB LORTON was hired on as a Wildlife Damage Specialist in May 2023. He covers DAY and MARSHALL

COUNTIES in northeastern South
Dakota. Jacob has a passion for wildlife.
From the time he could walk, he had a
fishing pole in his hand. During Junior
High, Jacob needed to do volunteer work
in a career field of his choice. He chose
to volunteer at a local waterfowl refuge,
Mercer Wildlife Area. From that day on,
he steered his life to work with wildlife.
After college Jacob commissioned into the
United States Marine Corps. He served six
honorable years in the Marine Corps as an
Officer.

Wildlife Damage Specialists



45,000 copies | Midstates Printing | \$.26 per copy

LANDOWNERS MATTER

GAME, FISH AND PARKS | 523 EAST CAPITOL AVE | PIERRE, SD 57501



South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks serves and connects people and families to the outdoors through effective management of our state's parks, fisheries, and wildlife resources.

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