



February 7, 2010

Girl Scouts—Dakota Horizons
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To: Eileen Dowd Stukel

Re: Girl Scouts—Dakota Horizons Final Report

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and the Game, Fish and Parks Department for funding from the Wildlife Diversity Small Grants Program.

In 2010, great strides were made in the first phase of a multi-tier project for wetland restoration at Camp Woodlands in Beadle County. The camp is located 8 miles southeast of Huron, South Dakota. The rustic camp is nestled in a prairie habitat with an established shelterbelt and vernal wetland area.

A serious problem existed at the camp: the wetland had been degraded by being used as a dumping site for waste road materials. The debris needed to be removed and the area cleared of dead trees so that new trees could be planted, along with native plants and grasses to attract birds and wildlife to the area. With the attraction of birds and wildlife, the camp can then be more fully utilized as an outdoor learning center.

After the awarding of the grant, council staff began recruiting volunteers for the labor-intensive task of clearing trees and preparing the site for contractors to start the work on building an observation deck and creating a nature trail.

It was determined that the use of volunteer labor would greatly reduce the cost of hiring a contractor for the same task, thus allowing more of the grant funds to be used for creating the nature trail and observation area.

The recruitment effort led to Camp Woodlands being selected as one of the project sites for the United Way Day of Caring, an annual event led by the Heartland United Way to assist non-profit organizations with projects that make a positive impact on the community. The council accepted United Way's offer since this fit perfectly with purpose and action plan set forth in the wetland restoration project.

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An incredible outpouring of volunteers arrived for the one-day event held in August. Approximately 40 volunteers – including the Huron High School Honor Society, Lions Club, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, United Way Board of Directors, Center of Independence clients & staff, Northwestern Energy employees and others too numerous to mention – signed up for the day at Camp Woodlands.

The Day of Caring volunteers accomplished a tremendous amount of work that greatly added to the success of the project in 2010. Following this event, council staff met with a local contractor and Game, Fish and Parks staff in Huron to finalize plans for the restoration project. A blueprint was made of the wetlands to show location of the nature trail and observation deck, keeping in mind the overall need of providing greater access to the area for young and old alike.

The observation deck will be used for birdwatching and nature studies, along with serving as a gathering place for groups using the new nature trail for hiking and other hands-on learning activities. Learning about the great outdoors is one of the main educational activities offered by both Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts with participants earning badges and other recognition for their efforts.

As a result of the wetland restoration, the council now and in the future will have a greater capability to offer more outdoor learning opportunities at Camp Woodlands than ever before. This accomplishment will have long-term benefits for Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts and all interested youth and community organizations.

The council requests reimbursement for the work completed on the project in the amount of \$5,000. An invoice from Todd Smith Construction is included with our final report.

Sincerely,



Grants Coordinator, Girl Scouts—Dakota Horizons

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Follow up photos of Camp Woodlands project site taken in 2015 by Matt Grunig, SDGFP Private Lands Biologist, Huron, SD, showing the habitat restoration, wildlife observation deck and wood duck box occupants.













