

# LANDOWNERS MATTER



# Getting Creative With Conservation Programs

ERIC MAGEDANZ | SENIOR PRIVATE LANDS HABITAT BIOLOGIST

As a landowner, there's a pretty high likelihood that at some point you have inquired about conservation programs that might be a good fit for your farm or ranch and your inquisition led you to a google search where your search results came back with 102 different acronyms. South Dakota is fortunate to have numerous conservation options for landowners but wading through



*Charlie's father, Jerome, with his doe harvested in the woody habitat planting at the age of 96*

what program would work best and who is the best person to talk to can seem daunting. Fortunately, Game, Fish, and Parks (GFP) employs private lands habitat biologists that are adept at designing conservation projects that fits the goals of the landowner, recommending the program options that are best suited for each unique project, and connecting or even partnering with other organizations where programs can compliment

one another. This is often the case with GFP's woody habitat program and USDA's CRP field windbreak tree practice. Rewind back to 2017, northeast South Dakota Charlie Even approached the local NRCS office expressing interest in establishing winter habitat that would benefit white-tailed deer and pheasant on his property. "I really wanted to enhance the existing winter cover and food plots I already have in this location", explained Charlie. Charlie is a 3rd generation landowner that has long practiced conservation on this multi-generational property with another generation

to follow. Knowing his goals was to improve winter habitat now and into the future, Charlie partnered with NRCS and GFP harnessing their woody habitat programs to enhance the 5 rows of CRP trees by adding an additional 4 rows. While 5 rows may provide some escape cover for deer and pheasants, plantings greater than 8 rows can maintain wildlife populations by increasing winter survival especially if positioned on the landscape in strategic locations. This habitat partnership



allowed Charlie to utilize CRP's cost share and annual payments and GFP's attractive cost share program for enhancing field windbreaks. Recognizing the interest from landowners in this CRP practice and the notion of building upon it, landowners that have an interest in providing the upmost in woody habitat can now receive 90% cost share through GFP's woody habitat program when adding rows onto CRP field windbreaks.

As the old adage goes, the best time to plant a tree was yesterday. If you are interested in learning more about GFP's woody habitat program or any other habitat program, locate a GFP Private Lands Habitat Biologist today to schedule a meeting on your property.



## CANADA GOOSE ABATEMENT BUFFER STRIP PROGRAM

JACQUIE ERMER | REGIONAL WILDLIFE SUPERVISOR

What a difference a year can make! Although many are thankful that we didn't have the same brutal winter conditions as last year, we are looking at much drier conditions this spring. Nonetheless, Canada geese continue to use South Dakota's nutrient-rich wetlands during the spring migration, while many others stay put and take up residency for several months to breed and raise their young. With that comes some challenges for area farmers, as the geese start feeding on the young, tender soybean shoots popping out of the ground next to wetlands and smaller bodies of water.

Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) offers numerous options to help reduce Canada goose damage to growing crops, ranging from short-term to long-term solutions. In recent years, staff have been making improvements to how producers can request services from GFP. For instance, a new online Canada Goose Depredation Hub ([gfp.sd.gov/forms](http://gfp.sd.gov/forms)) allows producers to apply for a Canada goose kill permit while also allowing them to request assistance from GFP to reduce goose damage to growing crops. Assistance ranges from temporary electric fence to propane cannons to buffer strips. While most of these options are short-term, buffer strips can provide a longer-term solution to reducing goose damage in a given area.

GFP offers annual buffer strips, as well as a 10 to 15-year option known as the Canada Goose Abatement Buffer Strip Program. The Abatement option is a partnership with Farm Service Agency (FSA) in which producers can enroll a 50 to 120-foot buffer into a Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and receive an upfront incentive payment plus an annual payment for the life of the contract. The Abatement option is ideal in areas that have a history of goose depredation.

Two such buffers have been established in recent years near the town of Roscoe in Edmunds County. Both producers experienced over ten years of goose depredation and had primarily used temporary electric fence almost every year. The abatement buffer strips have effectively reduced damage caused by Canada geese by creating a vegetative barrier and have also created some exceptional duck nesting cover for Pintails, Scaup, and Canvasbacks as well as for pheasants. The buffer also aids in filtering out pollutants and capturing nutrients before entering wetlands.

**For more information and to determine if the Canada Goose Abatement Buffer Strip Program can work for your operation, contact your local Wildlife Damage Specialist or Private Lands Habitat Biologist.**

# CHANGES THAT MAY IMPACT YOU

## 2024 SOUTH DAKOTA LEGISLATIVE SESSION UPDATE

CHAD SWITZER | WILDLIFE DIVISION DEPUTY DIRECTOR

With the conclusion of the 2024 legislative session, below are some bills recently passed and signed into codified law that might be of interest to you as a landowner. If you should have any questions, please reach out to your local GFP Office for further information.

HOUSE BILL 1119: Effective March 1, 2025, a habitat specialty plate and emblem for automobiles will be available as an option to the public. Revenue collected from the sale of the habitat conservation emblems placed on the habitat specialty plate will be deposited with GFP and used for habitat development and enhancement on public and private lands.

- » Habitat and access are key priorities for GFP and we look forward to expanding and creating new partnerships with landowners to help meet your land management objectives and enhance wildlife habitat.

SENATE BILL 14: Effective July 1, 2024, expanded the conditional taking of coyotes from snowmobiles, by allowing anyone 18 years of age or older, with landowner permission, to hunt coyotes from a stationary snowmobile on private lands.

- » GFP is supportive of removing additional coyotes, as well as allowing landowners to grant permission to other individuals to hunt coyotes from stationary snowmobiles. In addition, GFP works closely with

landowners by mitigating livestock and property loss through effective delivery of wildlife damage and animal control program services.

SENATE BILL 173: Effective July 1, 2024, established a landowner-on-own-land antlerless elk license for eligible landowners within the prairie elk hunting season.

- » Providing this option for eligible landowners will be important for the future management of elk on South Dakota's prairie landscape. The GFP Commission will now promulgate rules for implementation and will be available for the 2024 elk hunting seasons.

## LANDOWNERS PARTNER WITH GFP TO COLLAR ELK

MIKE KLOSOWSKI | REGIONAL WILDLIFE SUPERVISOR

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) recently took important steps to better understand chronic wasting disease (CWD) in South Dakota. CWD is a fatal disease caused by an abnormal protein called a prion. It was first discovered in wild South Dakota cervids in the early 2000s. Since then, the disease has slowly spread across the state and may pose a significant risk to deer and elk populations in the future.

In February, GFP staff, along with helicopter crews from Alaska, began capturing elk and fitting them with GPS collars. Before their release, crews collected tissue samples from the animals' ears, which were then sent to a diagnostics lab for analysis using a newly refined test called an RT-QuIC to determine if the animals were infected with CWD. This research will help GFP better understand survival rates, CWD prevalence, and movement patterns of elk.

One of the priorities of this research was to include elk captures on private property. Since a portion of the Black Hills, particularly in the southern and eastern regions, is privately owned, many elk spend time on private land as well as public land. With this objective in mind, GFP staff visited dozens of landowners in the Black Hills and explained the research, the capture process, and the significance of collaring some elk on private lands.

As staff visited landowners, one of the primary concerns expressed was elk being pushed by the helicopter and potentially damaging fences. GFP staff acknowledged this concern and assured landowners that they would address any fence damage. With that said, 71 landowners granted permission to capture elk on their property—a true testament to them being good stewards of the land.

With the help of landowners, GFP staff assisted helicopter crews in collaring 150 cow elk, completing the task in just under 11 days. The next steps in the research are important, and undoubtedly, landowners will once again volunteer to assist. On behalf of GFP and sportsmen and women across the state, we extend our gratitude and look forward to working together.



# PARTNERING FOR CONSERVATION

**ERIC MAGEDANZ** | SENIOR PRIVATE LANDS HABITAT BIOLOGIST

Conservation partnerships in South Dakota are pivotal to ensuring viable program options for working lands and wildlife are available and flexible for landowners. South Dakota is fortunate to have strong partnerships between conservation organizations and landowners. Recently, Ducks Unlimited and its partners were awarded a Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) to implement conservation practices that benefit working farms and ranches while simultaneously benefitting wildlife in South Dakota.

Operating under the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), RCPP takes a unique approach to conservation. Conservation partners work with producers and landowners to implement practices by providing financial incentives to aid landowners in meeting their farm and ranch objectives. The primary focus of the “Working Grasslands Partnership” will provide financial assistance for landowners interested in improving grazing management on rangeland through the installation of grazing infrastructure such as cross fencing and water development and providing rental payments for establishing grass on cropland. Understanding converting cropland to grassland can take time and income deferment, the goal of the Working Grassland Partnership is to provide annual rental payments for up to three years while grass seedings becomes established. Once established, the grassland can be incorporated into an operation’s management plan. RCPP agreements are still being negotiated, but a signup is anticipated in summer 2024.

Because the majority of land in South Dakota is privately owned,





developing program options that remain flexible and appealing for producers while providing complimentary benefits for range health, livestock production, and wildlife habitat is consequential for South Dakota producers and conservation groups. Cattle producers who practice sound grazing management, like rotational grazing, benefit wildlife by avoiding overutilization of forage resources, maintaining cover for wildlife and encouraging plant diversity. The benefits of these same grazing tenets extend to rangeland health for cattle production by increasing water infiltration, forage production, and keeping the soil covered, lowering ground temperatures and evaporation rates and retaining soil moisture for plant utilization.

Partners involved with the Working Grasslands Partnership include the lead organization Ducks Unlimited and partners Natural Resources Conservation Service, South

Dakota Grassland Coalition, South Dakota Soil Health Coalition, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Audubon Great Plains, and South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks. Of course, conservation in South Dakota wouldn't be possible without partnerships with landowners.

If you are interested in learning more about the Working Lands Partnership, find a habitat advisor at [habitat.sd.gov](https://habitat.sd.gov).

# 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 1 acre 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

#### ABERDEEN

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#### BELLE FOURCHE

Bill Eastman | 605.391.1575

#### BROOKINGS

Will Gallman | 704.689.9091

#### CHAMBERLAIN

Jessica Thiry | 605.682.8476

#### CUSTER

Tom Miklos | 605.416.4080

#### FORT PIERRE

John Mayrose | 605.222.0867

#### HOT SPRINGS

Ben Pucket | 605.786.8144

#### MITCHELL

Alex Elias | 605.350.1725

#### MOBRIDGE

Kody Conlon | 605.848.0980

#### TYNDALL

Todd Crownover | 605.464.0647

#### WATERTOWN

Dan Nelson | 605.303.4805

#### WEBSTER

Calvin Meyer | 605.265.3510



Learn more: [habitat.sd.gov](http://habitat.sd.gov)



# ENROLL YOUR LAND

IN THE CONSERVATION RESERVE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM TODAY!

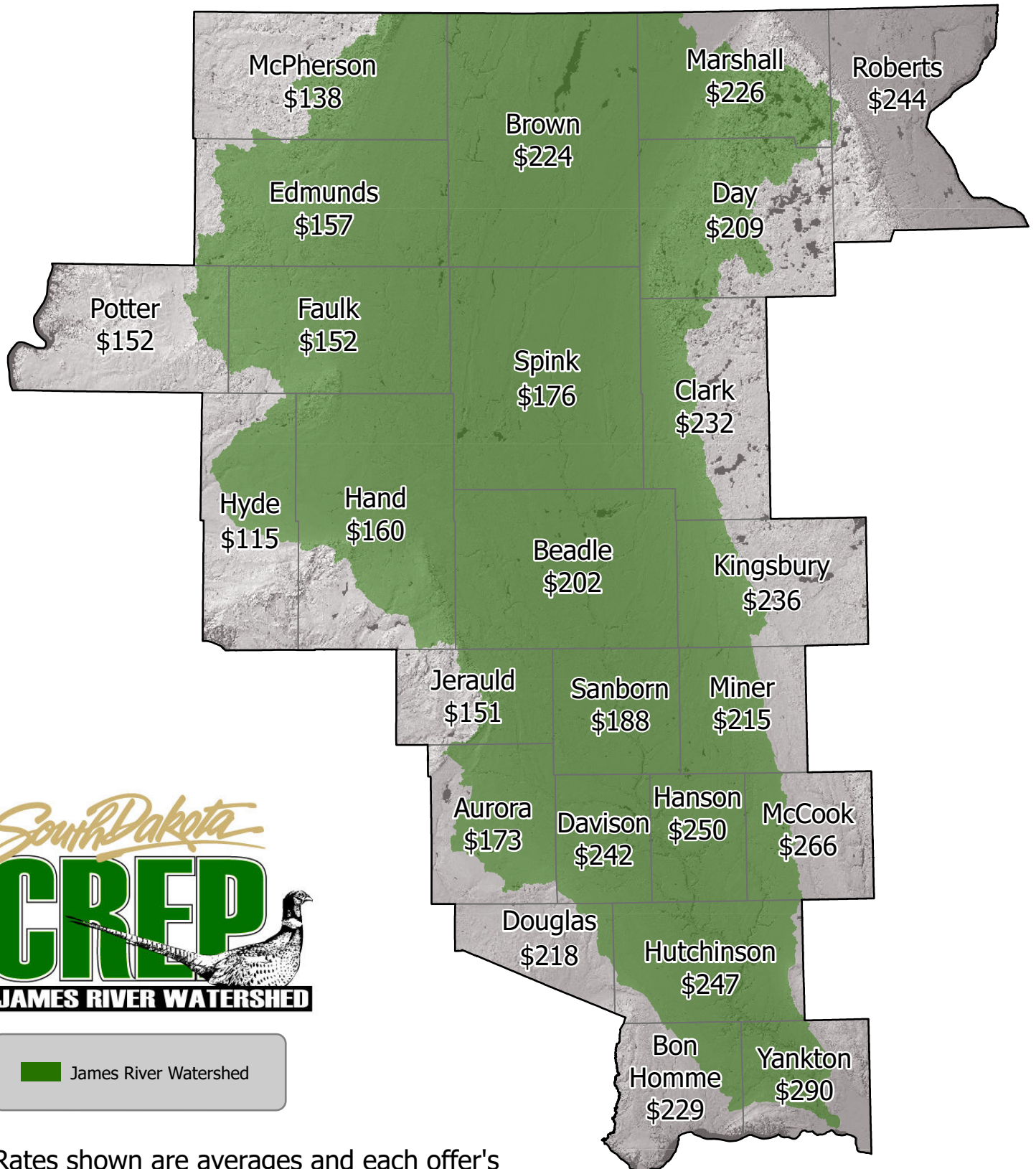


Legend  
■ Big Sioux River Watershed CREP  
■ James River Watershed CREP



**Create wildlife habitat, improve water quality, increase livestock forage resources, and provide public hunting and fishing access on your land through enrollment in CREP in the Big Sioux River Watershed or the James River Watershed. Participants receive additional annual rental payments from GFP on top of the annual CRP rental payments. *Contact a GFP Private Lands Habitat Biologist to learn more.***

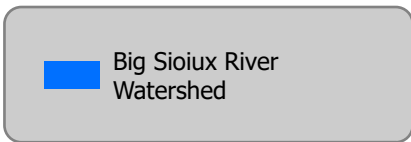
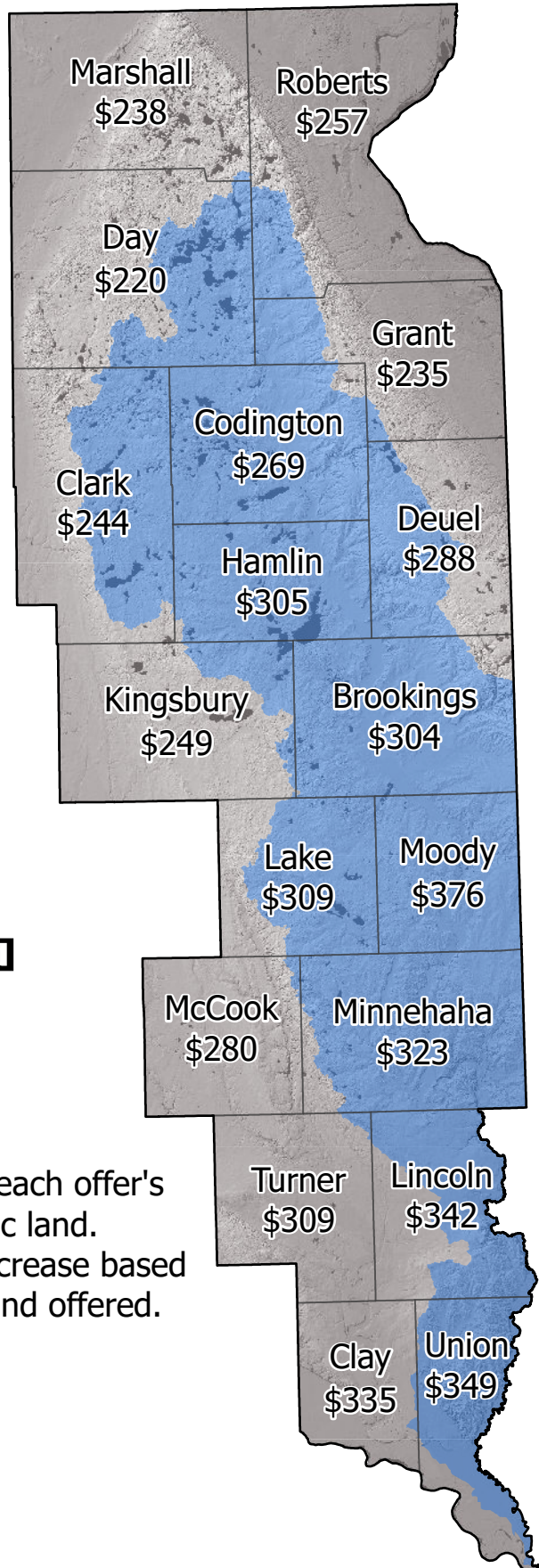
# CREP County Average Rental Rate/Acre Total of Federal CRP and SD GFP CREP Payments



James River Watershed

Rates shown are averages and each offer's rate will be based on the specific land. These rates may increase or decrease based on the soil productivity of the land offered.

# CREP County Average Rental Rate/Acre Total of Federal CRP and SD GFP CREP Payments



Rates shown are averages and each offer's rate will be based on the specific land. These rates may increase or decrease based on the soil productivity of the land offered.

## P.A.T.H. ENROLLMENT NOW AVAILABLE!

This past fall, Pheasants Forever proudly announced a new outdoor access initiative with the goal of enrolling 10,000 acres per year in South Dakota. The Public Access to Habitat (P.A.T.H.) program accelerates the statewide enrollment of lands in long-term conservation programs while bolstering participation in South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks' (GFP) Walk-In Area (WIA) program. The inaugural year, fully funded at \$250K through national sponsors onX Hunt and South Dakota Tourism, opened enrollment to landowners starting on September 1, 2023.

Additive to the current GFP Walk-In Area program and administered in a similar manner, P.A.T.H. provides an additional sign-up incentive of up to \$25 per acre, paid in advance, in return for 10 years of undisturbed habitat and hunting access on private lands. Landowners work directly with biologists from Pheasants Forever or GFP for site evaluation and implementation, following approval from a review panel. When combined with other financial incentives (signing bonus and payment for walk-in access plus conservation program payment), P.A.T.H. enrollments pay landowners a competitive rate for a decade of habitat stewardship and hunting access on quality grasslands, well-managed rangelands, and shelterbelts.



### Economic Impact:

According to data from South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks, the impact of private lands enrolled in public access programs supported by the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP) in 2021 included the following economic benefits across South Dakota:



### EXAMPLE 1:

#### 160 Acre CRP/WIA

- P.A.T.H. payment:  
160 acres X \$25/acre = \$4,000
- SDGFP WIA signing bonus:  
160 acres X 10 years X \$10/acre = \$16,000
- SDGFP WIA payment:  
160 acres X \$10/acre = \$1,600 annually
- Annual CRP payment (based on location)

» **Total Payment: \$36,000 for Public Access + Annual CRP Payments**

### EXAMPLE 2:

#### 2,000 Acres Working Lands with Habitat

- P.A.T.H. payment will match GFP signing bonus for 10 year contracts
- P.A.T.H. payment:  
2,000 acres X \$1/acre = \$2,000 up front
- SDGFP WIA:  
2,000 acres X \$1/acre = \$2,000 annually
- Possible SDGFP Signing Bonus

» **Total Payments: \$22,000 for Public Access**



SCAN FOR ENROLLMENT OPPORTUNITIES OR TO LEARN MORE  
[pheasantsforever.org/path](https://pheasantsforever.org/path)



SOUTH DAKOTA GAME, FISH AND PARKS

# PRIVATE LAND HUNTING ACCESS PROGRAMS

## WALK-IN AREA PROGRAM (WIA)

Leases hunting rights on private land for unlimited public foot traffic hunting. Annual payments range from less than a \$1 to \$13/acre depending on size, location in the state, habitat condition, and hunting opportunities. Multi-year contracts are eligible for signing bonuses if they provide priority big game hunting opportunity or access to habitat that isn't hayed or grazed in most years. Signing bonuses are \$5 or \$10 per acre per year the land is enrolled depending on your location.

## CONTROLLED HUNTING ACCESS PROGRAM (CHAP)

Leases public hunting rights on private land according to the limits the landowners sets. Limits may include the number of hunters per day, the type of game that can be hunted, the type of take (ex. Archery only), and the dates that it is open to hunting. Landowners manage hunter access via direct contact, self-service check-in box, or through an on-line reservation system on the GFP website. Annual payment is equal to a base payment of \$500 plus \$20/hunter that hunts the property. Multi-year contracts are eligible for a signing bonus based on the hunting opportunity that is provided. New contracts are eligible for \$1,000/year signing bonus for up to a 5 year contract.

## CO-OP WIA HUNTING ACCESS

Leases same hunting rights as a Walk-in Area, but also allows hunters to drive on harvested cropland to place and retrieve waterfowl decoys and allows disabled hunter permit holders to drive on harvested cropland and hunt from their vehicle. No hunting is allowed while farm machinery is working in the field. Annual payments range from \$1.25 to \$3/acre depending on if driving is restricted to ATV/UTVs and the amount of habitat that isn't hayed or grazed in most years. Multi-year contracts are eligible for a signing bonus of half the annual payment times the number of years in the contract.

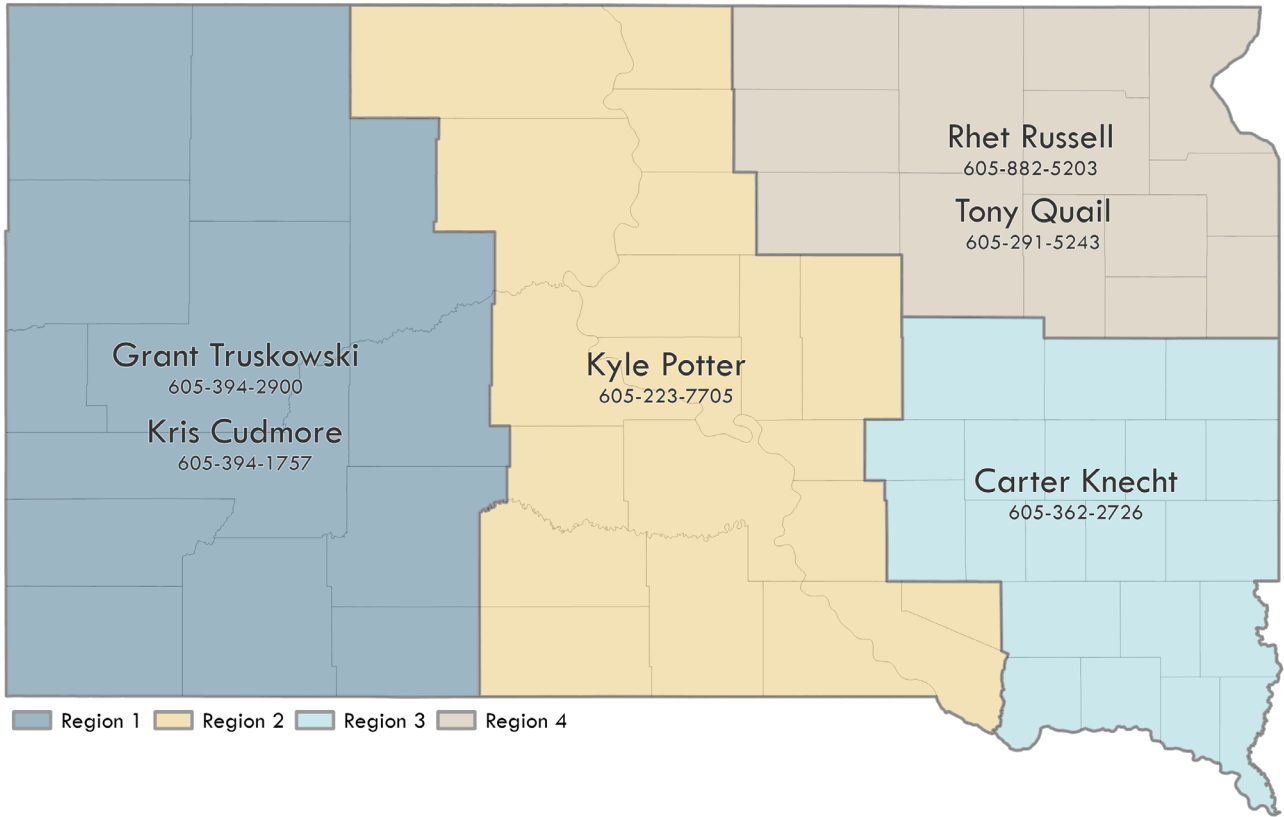
*State statutes (SDCL 20-9-12 through SDCL 20-9-18) protect landowners who enroll in these programs from certain liability.*



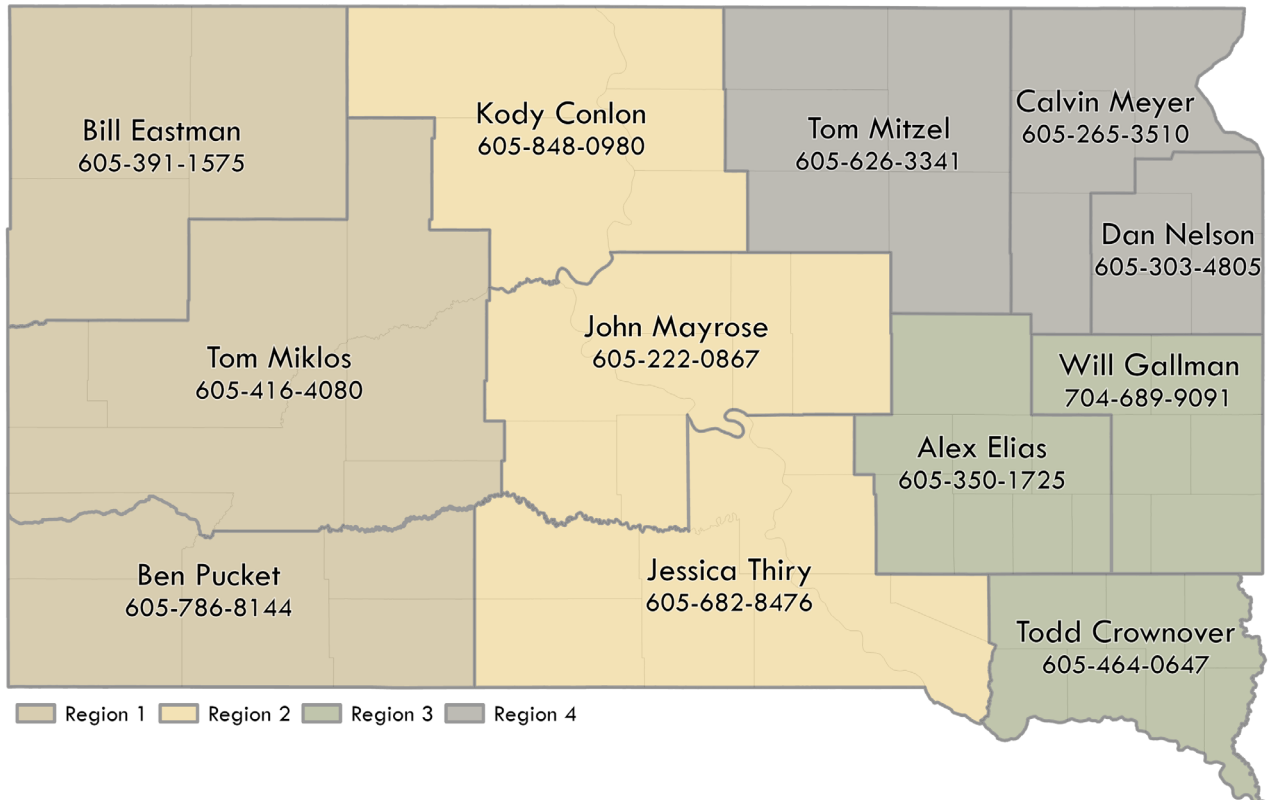
**INTERESTED IN ENROLLING IN ONE OF THESE HUNTING ACCESS PROGRAMS CONTACT ONE OF GFP'S PRIVATE LANDS HABITAT BIOLOGISTS!**



## Aquatic Habitat and Access Biologists



## Private Lands Habitat and Access Biologists



# NEW STAFF SHOWCASE



**TOM MITZEL** previously worked as a habitat intern out of Rapid City and Aberdeen and recently worked at a veterinary research company. He is now back in a position where he can focus his passion on helping private landowners with habitat development and improvements.

In his new position as a Private Lands Habitat Biologist, he will be working with landowners in Brown, McPherson, Edmunds, Spink, and Faulk counties and is looking forward working on a variety of projects.



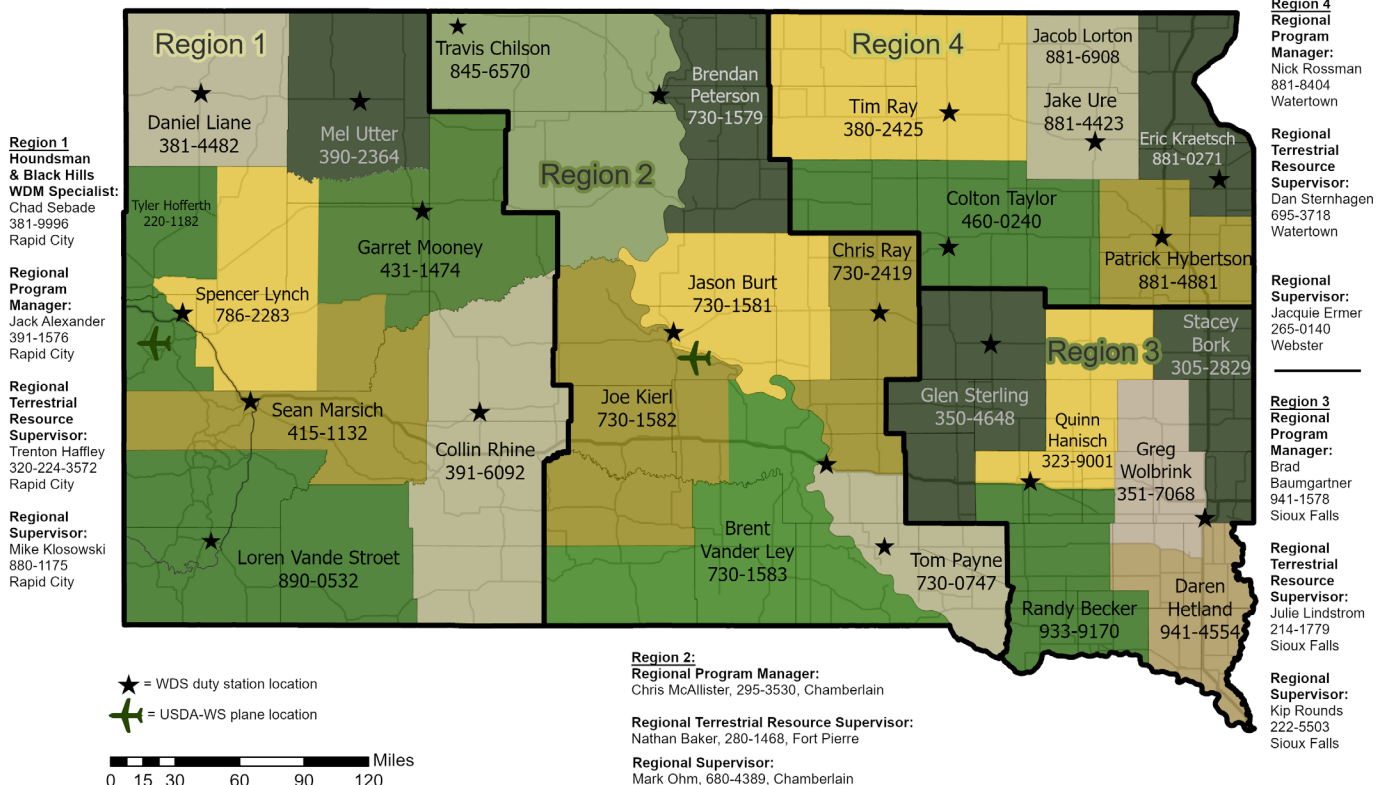
**WILL GALLMAN'S** love for waterfowl conservation and great opportunities to hunt brought our newest Private Lands Habitat Biologist to South Dakota several years ago. Originally from North Carolina, Will has had a lifelong desire to pursue a career in wildlife management and conservation. After

completing his undergraduate degree at Clemson University, Will accepted a graduate position with South Dakota State University.

After he graduated, Will worked as a Farm Bill Biologist both in Worthington, MN and in Flandreau, SD. Will is passionate about wildlife habitat conservation and is excited to work with landowners to create a legacy for future generations of South Dakotans. His new work district includes McCook County east of Highway 81, in addition to Kingsbury, Brookings, Lake, Moody, and Minnehaha Counties. Give him a call to discuss habitat conservation projects on your property, he's excited to hear from you!



## South Dakota GFP Wildlife Damage Management Program



# LANDOWNERS MATTER

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



TO MAKE CHANGES TO YOUR ADDRESS FOR THIS PUBLICATION,  
PLEASE EMAIL [ALLIE.ELLINGSON@STATE.SD.US](mailto:ALLIE.ELLINGSON@STATE.SD.US)

*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.*

## CONSERVATION OFFICERS

Aberdeen	Nick Cochran Jakob Heyd Tim McCurdy (District CO Supervisor)	605.881.7594 605.237.9878 605.380.4572	Miller	Jon Dunlap Cory Flor (District CO Supervisor)	605.730.1570 605.680.0003
Belle Fourche	Jacob Schwint	605.391.6042	Mobridge	Patrick Beffa	605.845.6286
Britton	Jack Baumert	605.280.4738	Olivet	Taylor Etherington	605.941.4735
Brookings	Jeff Grendler	605.360.0509	Onida	Tyler Krekelberg	605.730.1384
Buffalo	Adam Fuest	605.280.7482	Pierre	Jason Hamil	605.280.7619
Canton	Josh VandenBosch	605.940.0222	Plankinton	Lynn Geuke	605.220.6943
Chamberlain	Diana Landegent Travis March	605.730.1578 605.730.1573	Platte	Eric Brumbaugh Jeff Martin (District CO Supervisor)	605.295.1966 605.730.1575
Clark	Zach Thomsen	605.881.2260	Presho	Wyatt Weber	605.222.4192
Clear Lake	Adam Behnke	605.881.3780	Rapid City	Chris Dekker Ross Fees Adam Geigle (District CO Supervisor) Jim McCormick (Regional CO Supervisor)	605.390.0923 605.381.3734 605.390.1230 605.381.9500
Custer	Ron Tietsort Jenna Capper Jim Ganser	605.431.7048 605.391.2132 605.431.8099	Redfield	Shane Pedersen	605.460.0450
Elk Point	Tony Stokley	605.677.7814	Salem	Alex Osborne Matt Talbert (District CO Supervisor)	605.220.1169 605.360.0491
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Gettysburg	Kendyll DeRouchev	605.730.1568	Sisseton	Anna Sells	605.881.3773
Gregory	Cheyenne Colton	605.280.4741	Spearfish	Josh Thompson Brian Meiers (District CO Supervisor) Mike Apland (District CO Supervisor)	605.381.4704 605.391.6023 605.391.1574
Hayti	Logan Hammer	605.881.0018	Sturgis	Ryan Pearson	605.391.0836
Hill City	Jeff Edwards	605.381.9995	Tyndall	Taylor Kirchner	605.360.0497
Hot Springs	D.J. Schroeder Seth Lorton	605.381.6438 605.880.0009	Vermillion	Tanner Pietz	605.975.1482
Ipswich	Eric Voigt Joe Galbraith (District CO Supervisor)	605.380.4376 605.380.4563	Wall	Derek Pelton	605.220.9688
Kadoka	Jason Hamar	605.891.5775	Watertown	Kyle Lenzner Jackson Knight Kraig Haase (Regional CO Supervisor)	605.881.3777 605.280.1545 605.881.3774
Lake Preston	Christopher Schiera	605.370.0980	Webster	Austin Norton Calvin Meyer	605.881.2177 605.237.3275
Lemmon	Edgar Meza	605.415.6462	Winner	Dillon Bates	605.730.1576
Madison	Cody Symens	605.480.3364	Yankton	Don Allaway Dan Altman (District CO Supervisor)	605.350.1669 605.941.4549
Martin	Tom Beck	605.381.6433			
Milbank	Blake Swanson Jamie Pekelder (District CO Supervisor)	605.881.3779 605.881.3778			