

Wildlife Damage Management Program

Fiscal Year 2017



Wildlife Division Report Number: 2017-09

Keith J. Fisk



"The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks provides sustainable outdoor recreational opportunities through responsible management of our state's parks, fisheries and wildlife by fostering partnerships, cultivating stewardship and safely connecting people with the outdoors."

South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks
523 East Capitol Avenue, Pierre, SD 57501

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Introduction

Hello! I'm excited to share another year's worth of accomplishments that the Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Wildlife Damage Management (WDM) program achieved. With more than 85% percent of South Dakota held in private ownership, partnerships with landowners and producers are critical to GFP's overall mission. GFP works hard to cooperatively work with landowners and producers to resolve many types of wildlife damage to maintain these important relationships. Private lands in South Dakota produce the majority of wildlife that occur in the state and these lands also provide places for most hunting opportunities, which many South Dakotans and visitors enjoy every year. It is because of these important considerations that GFP operates such an active and comprehensive WDM program. Last year, GFP spent over \$3 million to operate the WDM programs in South Dakota and responded to nearly 2,700 requests for assistance which directly impacted over 2,200 landowners and producers!

Cooperative partnerships are critical components to the success of our programs and I want to acknowledge the important partnerships that we have with landowners, producers, predator control districts, and other cooperating agencies. By continuing to work together, our cooperative efforts have impacted many South Dakotans and continue to build lasting relationships. Meeting the demands of our customers is an important element within GFP and continues to be a large part of our mission. Listening to customers and making the necessary changes to our programs and services so that programs meet the desired outcome is very important to GFP and serves as the foundation for building lasting relationships. This report highlights the important services and hard work that our dedicated professionals provide to landowners and producers throughout South Dakota and without the assistance of these other partners, our programs would not be as successful.

As the agency in South Dakota responsible for managing the wildlife resources, GFP manages with a science-based approach. However, careful consideration is given to social tolerances and landowner concerns which play an integral role in wildlife management and the delivery of our program services. GFP has a proven history of cooperatively working with landowners and producers to resolve wildlife damage concerns and remains committed to working with landowners and producers to address the impacts wildlife can have to private property. I hope this summary gives you a better understanding of these valuable services.

Sincerely,



Keith Fisk
Wildlife Damage Program Administrator

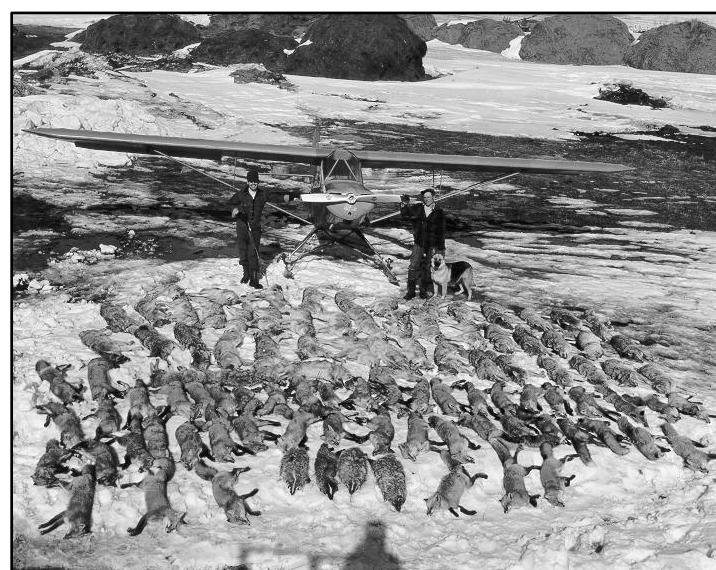
History of Wildlife Damage Management in South Dakota

South Dakota has a very diverse landscape and land-use varies greatly across the state. This diversity as well as local wildlife populations, weather conditions, changes to local habitat, and social tolerances all help determine the services the WDM program offer. GFP operates a multi-faceted WDM program which is designed to address human-wildlife conflicts involving most species of wildlife that occur throughout South Dakota. Currently, 27 wildlife damage specialists, numerous seasonal staff, and many other GFP staff provide the “boots-on-the-ground” delivery of the WDM program services. Wildlife damage staff work directly with South Dakota’s livestock and agricultural producers to alleviate or reduce livestock loss from predators (primarily coyote) as well as crop, tree, and road damage caused from beaver. They help to minimize or alleviate damage to stored-feed supplies caused by deer, elk, and turkey, and work to reduce damage to growing crops from Canada geese, deer, elk, and pronghorn. In addition, GFP also provides prairie dog control on private lands that have been encroached from adjacent public land. However, these programs haven’t always functioned under the current operational guidelines.



Initially, GFP operated only the Animal Damage Control (ADC) program which was mandated by state law in 1939. This program was then more formalized in 1974 by the South Dakota Legislature. The passage of this legislation established the program and funding which

allowed GFP to employ personnel to control coyotes, fox, prairie dogs, and other wild animals injurious to landowners. This legislation developed a system to fund the program wherein state law provided for an assessment to each county based upon livestock numbers (i.e. cattle and sheep) located within the county. While the assessment amount is generated using the numbers of livestock, all tax-payers within a county contribute. This law also mandated that GFP match those county monies on a 1:1 basis initially, and beginning in 1999 the GFP match



increased to a 2:1 rate. The county assessments generate approximately \$300,000 and coupled with the GFP match of 2:1, another \$600,000 is added. During the legislative session of 2013, the South Dakota Legislature enacted legislation that added an additional one-dollar surcharge

to most hunting licenses. This one-dollar surcharge adds approximately another \$300,000 for ADC program funding. Then during the legislative session of 2017, the South Dakota Legislature increased the transaction fee for the sale of licenses. This increase allocated another \$200,000 for the program. Finally, the S.D. Department of Agriculture provides some additional funding to the ADC program each year to assist with prairie dog control. Initially, GFP employed a number of "Extension Trappers", who were responsible for specific work districts and responded to requests for service from South Dakota's landowners and producers. Over the years, GFP also operated an aerial predator control program to control coyotes and fox in local areas during this time period. Most requests for assistance involved problems with coyotes, fox, beaver, raccoon, and prairie dogs. Since 2000, GFP has expended nearly \$22 million on ADC program services in South Dakota.

As the populations of other wildlife species (i.e. deer, elk, turkey, and Canada geese) increased, they began to impact more South Dakota landowners and producers. The South



Dakota Legislature adopted legislation in 1999 which attached a five-dollar surcharge to most hunting licenses in South Dakota to provide additional funding to help landowners and producers. One-half of the monies raised from this surcharge go towards hunter access programs and the other one-half is used to support the WDM program.

This surcharge generates approximately \$1.7 million annually, again split 50:50 between WDM and hunter access. It has also been GFP's position to utilize the proceeds from Special Buck licenses to help fund WDM program services, which generates an additional \$400,000 each year. Then during the legislative session of 2017, the South Dakota Legislature increased the transaction fee for the sale of licenses. This increase allocated another \$200,000 for the program.

Combined, the WDM portion of the program receives approximately \$1.5 million annually in funding support. These funds are used to alleviate or reduce impacts to agricultural and livestock producers as a direct result from wildlife depredation. In 2001, four wildlife damage specialists (one within each administrative region) were hired to help implement the initial program services. In addition, assistance is also provided by wildlife conservation officers and other field staff across the state when needed.



As a condition to receive assistance, landowners and producers are asked to sign an agreement with GFP that states they do not charge for hunting access (for the species they are requesting assistance with) and they agree to allow reasonable free hunting access to people that obtain proper permission.

In 2009, these two programs (i.e. ADC and WDM) were formally consolidated and the comprehensive WDM program that GFP operates today was created. At the same time, GFP also entered into a cooperative agreement with USDA-Wildlife Services (USDA-WS) in regards to aerial predator control in South Dakota. Currently, USDA-WS is responsible for most aerial predator control operations while GFP provides predator control services via ground-control methods. Additionally, GFP provides USDA-WS with funding for the operation of a second aircraft for central and eastern South Dakota.

Under the consolidated program, extension trappers were reclassified as wildlife damage specialists and are now responsible for providing assistance to producers with all types of requests for service within their respective work district. Dependent upon their location and demand from producers, some wildlife damage specialists work primarily with deer and Canada geese while others work primarily on predator control. Obviously, weather and local wildlife populations dictate the amount and types of services that wildlife damage staff provides.

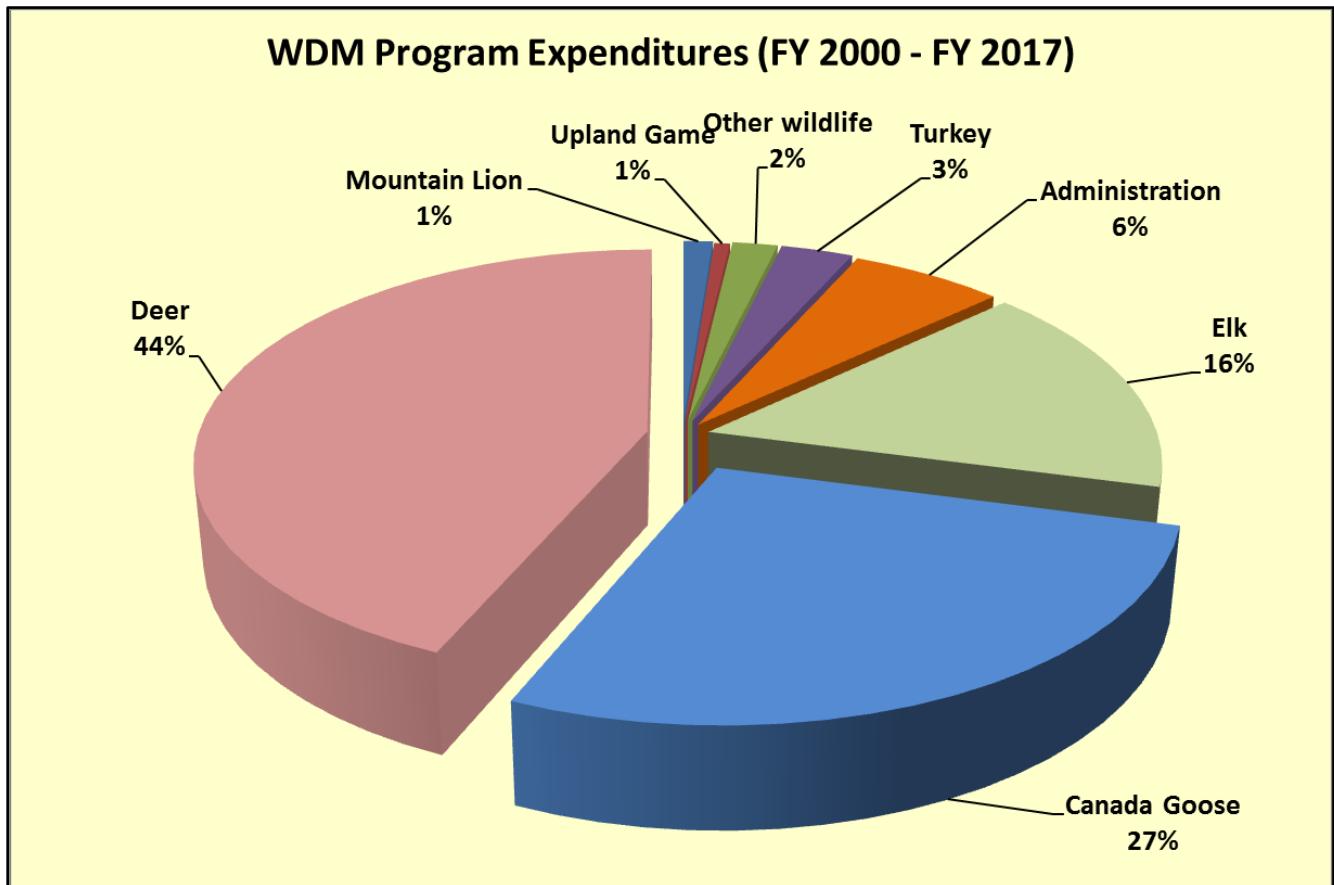


As the demand for program services has increased, GFP has been responsive in assuring that maximum services are provided to our producers and landowners in South Dakota, within the limits of available funding. As an example, for many years GFP provided only very limited services in regards to Canada goose depredation assistance. However, as the resident Canada



goose population increased in eastern South Dakota as well as the demand from producers and landowners, GFP's services increased accordingly. For example, in fiscal year 2002 GFP spent \$243,857 on Canada goose depredation assistance and in fiscal year 2012, GFP spent \$717,262. Again, demonstrating that as the demand for services increased, so did GFP's efforts to reduce or alleviate the corresponding crop damage.

Since 2000, GFP has spent nearly \$22 million on resolving game species depredation (primarily deer, elk, and Canada geese) on private land. As we move forward, GFP remains committed to continuing to adapt services and programs to best meet the demands from our partners in wildlife management, South Dakota's landowners and producers.



New for 2017

- New in 2017, the South Dakota Legislature approved an increase to the transaction fee that is charged when people purchase a hunting license at convenience stores or on GFP's website. The amount of revenue generated from sales on the GFP website is approximately \$400,000 dependent upon each year's license sales. The Legislature allocated these new monies to be split equally between deer depredation services and predator control efforts.
- GFP implemented a new online registration system for landowners and producers that request assistance with prairie dog control. Landowners simply fill out their information and use the mapping feature to identify the area where the prairie dogs encroached onto their property from adjacent public land and they are then registered for GFP's assistance.
- GFP received \$5,000 from the Multi-County Predator Control District (Harding, Butte, and portions of Lawrence and Meade counties). These funds were used to assist with the unanticipated costs associated with implementing an emergency contract with a pilot from North Dakota to provide critical aerial predator control services in western South Dakota during several months that USDA-Wildlife Services aerial operations were grounded because of a recent crash-related fatality.
- GFP hired five new staff across the state. The duty stations that were re-filled with these new staff members were Buffalo, Bison, Faith, Mitchell, and Webster.
- The GFP-family and the landowners and producers in central South Dakota were deeply saddened when Wildlife Damage Specialist, Randy Roede and his wife lost their lives in a tragic vehicle accident. May God bless Randy and his wife and their entire family!



Wildlife Damage Management Program Goals

When someone thinks of a Wildlife Damage Specialist (WDS), several thoughts may come to mind. Those thoughts may consist of a GFP staff member assisting with trapping a coyote that has killed livestock, assisting with the construction of electric fence to protect growing crops from Canada goose damage, or assistance regarding deer damage to stored-feed supplies. While these answers are all correct, wildlife damage specialists play an important role within GFP and provide the people of South Dakota with many valuable services.

Primary Purpose

With more than 85 percent of South Dakota in private ownership, private landowners play a pivotal role in wildlife management. Wildlife damage specialists cooperatively work with landowners and producers to alleviate or reduce all types of wildlife damage to private property. This includes alleviating livestock loss caused by coyotes and fox, reducing damage to stored-feed supplies from deer, elk, and turkeys, reducing damage to growing crops from Canada geese, alleviating livestock loss and protecting the general public from mountain lions, reducing damage to commercial melon growers from raccoons and deer, controlling prairie dogs on lands adjacent to public land, and reducing damage to crops, dams, trees,



roads and other property from beaver. They assist landowners with a diversity of other human-wildlife conflicts such as pronghorn antelope and pheasant depredation as well as hawk and owl control to protect poultry. There are also certain situations where wildlife damage staff assists with public safety such as the protection of levees and dikes from wildlife (during the flooding events in 2011), wildlife threats on or near airports, human-wildlife conflicts with aggressive wildlife species and other situations that arise.

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Some staff members also train and supervise a large number of seasonal employees and interns which provide the primary workforce for many wildlife damage management activities. Wildlife damage specialists interact with thousands of landowners and producers each year and GFP relies on these staff members for agency communications with the citizens of South Dakota at the grass-roots level.

Wildlife Damage Specialist of the Year Award:

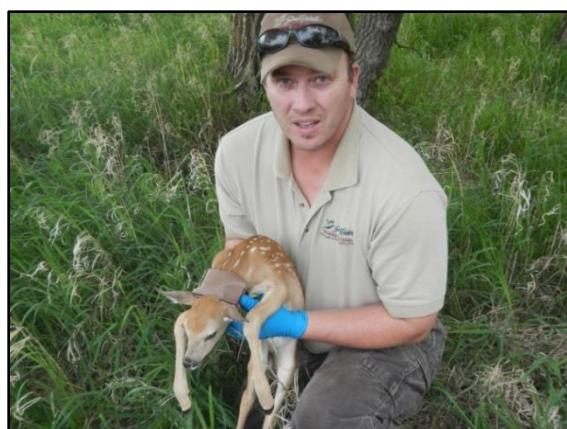
Each year, one wildlife damage specialist is selected for this award from peers and supervisors. This year, Chad Sebade (second from the right) was selected for his dedication and outstanding performance in western South Dakota (Region 1). Chad has worked for GFP for over 16 years



and has created many valuable relationships with the producers and landowners he works with. He serves the producers in his district with excellent customer service, whether it is with elk depredation or coyote control, and he always represents the Department in a professional manner. Chad's dedication, hard work, and positive attitude allow him to address difficult situations effectively every time. Congratulations to Chad!

Wildlife Management

Wildlife damage specialists assist with many different wildlife surveys and disease monitoring efforts that GFP conducts throughout the year. They assist with surveys such as deer classification and aerial surveys, fawn captures, pheasant brood routes, pronghorn antelope surveys, elk surveys, grouse surveys and turkey counts. They help with duck and goose banding, bobcat tagging, and walleye spawning when time allows. They are also called upon to work with other GFP staff on disease monitoring efforts such as Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD), Avian Influenza, and recent Tuberculosis (TB) sampling in wildlife. They assist with wildlife research projects when projects demand certain skills or personnel and play a vital role in the success of many projects. Wildlife damage specialists also provide input on recommendations for the many different seasons and licenses that South Dakota offers.



Public Outreach and Education

Another important role that wildlife damage specialists play is to provide educational seminars and demonstrations to sportsmen groups, schools, and other interested groups to promote the sport hunting and trapping of furbearers. Wildlife damage staff participates in events throughout South Dakota such as the Step-Outside Program and other GFP-sponsored public outreach events. Wildlife damage specialists present information regarding the WDM



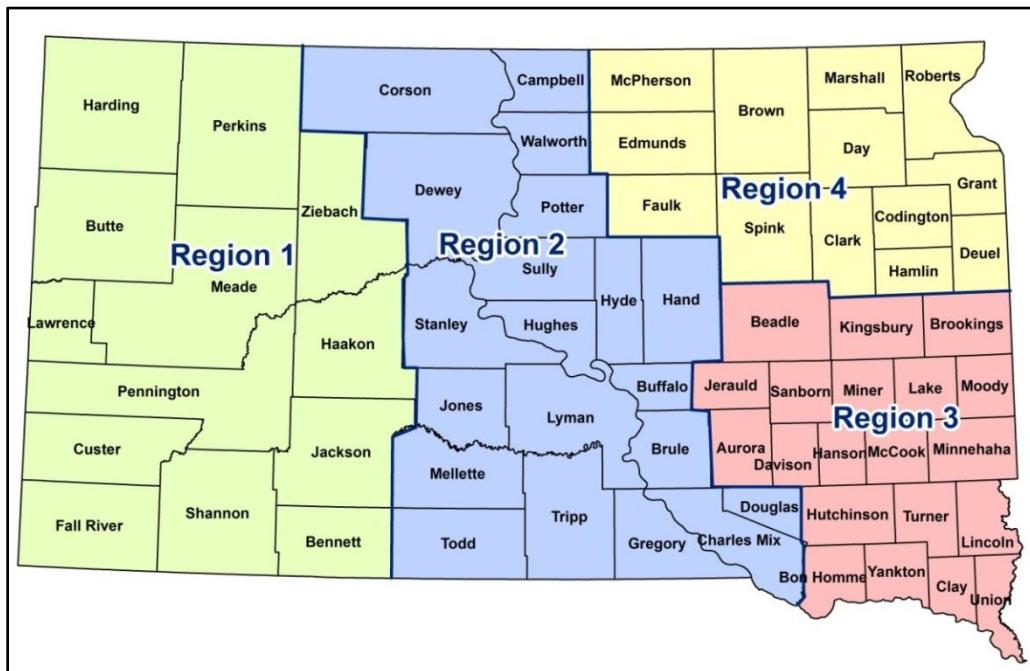
program to county commissions, predator control districts, and appear at numerous other public meetings throughout the year. Administrators routinely interact with stakeholder groups such as the WDM Working Group, ADC Policy Advisory Committee, SD Stockgrowers, SD Sheepgrowers, SD Cattlemen, SD Ag Unity, GFP Commission, and many other organizations, policy-makers, and groups. They also coordinate management activities and operations with other partners

such as USDA-WS, USDA Forest Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, South Dakota Department of Agriculture and other state and federal agencies as well as cooperate on wildlife damage research with South Dakota State University and USDA National Wildlife Research Center.

Program accountability is an important element for GFP and it's critical that our constituents' needs are being met by our programs and services as well as providing accountability to the sportsmen and women that provide funding for these important programs. Over the past five years, GFP has made a considerable effort to demonstrate accountability and transparency through enhanced public communication efforts.

Division of Wildlife - Administrative Regions

The Division of Wildlife's Operations Section is divided into four administrative regions. Each region works under the supervision of a regional supervisor along with other assistant supervisory staff. Each region then has assorted field-staff which conduct the "on-the-ground" work and services to the citizens of South Dakota. In addition to the four administrative regions, the Division of Wildlife also has an administrative section which consists of a program administrator and support staff.



Region 1 (Western): Bennett, Butte, Custer, Fall River, Haakon, Harding, Jackson, Lawrence, Meade, Pennington, Perkins, Shannon, and Ziebach.

Region 2 (Central): Brule, Buffalo, Campbell, Charles Mix, Corson, Dewey, Douglas, Gregory, Hand, Hughes, Hyde, Jones, Lyman, Mellette, Potter, Stanley, Sully, Todd, Tripp, and Walworth.

Region 3 (Southeast): Aurora, Beadle, Bon Homme, Brookings, Clay, Davison, Hanson, Hutchinson, Jerald, Kingsbury, Lake, Lincoln, McCook, Miner, Minnehaha, Moody, Sanborn, Turner, Union, and Yankton.

Region 4 (Northeast): Brown, Clark, Codington, Day, Deuel, Edmunds, Faulk, Grant, Hamlin, Marshall, McPherson, Roberts, and Spink.

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Administrative Staff

Kelly Hepler, Department Secretary

Tony Leif, Wildlife Division Director

Tom Kirschenmann, Wildlife Division Deputy Director

Mike Kintigh, Regional Supervisor – Region 1 (West)

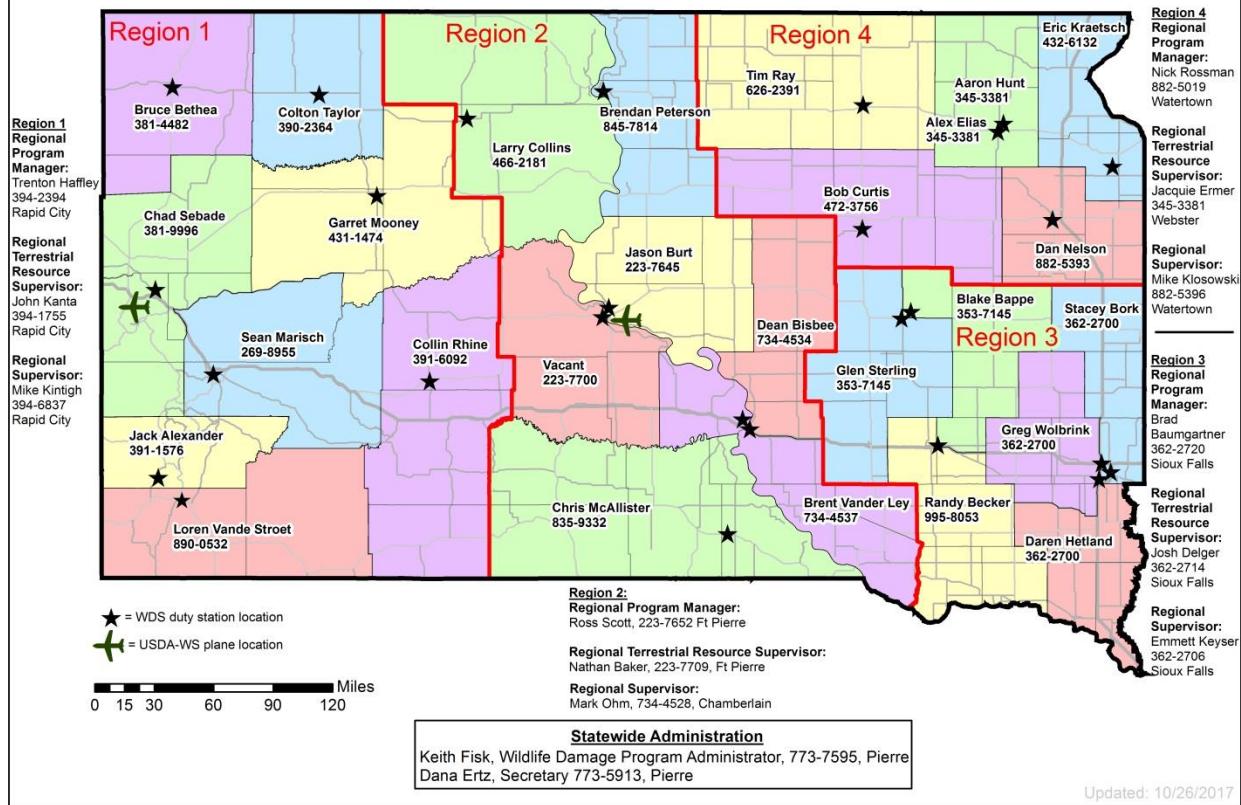
Mark Ohm, Regional Supervisor – Region 2 (Central)

Emmett Keyser, Regional Supervisor – Region 3 (Southeast)

Mike Klosowski, Regional Supervisor – Region 4 (Northeast)



South Dakota GFP Wildlife Damage Management Program



Statewide – Program Report and Summary

The state of South Dakota consists of 66 counties and has a diverse landscape from east to west as well as from north to south. This diverse landscape includes croplands, grasslands, wetlands and lakes, rugged river drainages, badlands, and the Black Hills. These varying landscapes also present their own unique set of challenges due to the wildlife species that are present, weather conditions, and population acceptance levels. South Dakota has an abundance of wildlife species and includes populations of white-tailed deer, mule deer, upland game, waterfowl, pronghorn antelope, elk, furbearers, turkeys, and mountain lions. Twenty-seven full-time wildlife damage specialists, numerous seasonal positions, and assisting GFP staff provide the “boots-on-the-ground” delivery of the important WDM programs and services. These programs provide direct assistance to South Dakota producers and landowners when wildlife damage concerns arise. The depredation assistance that GFP primarily provides includes assistance with beaver, Canada geese, coyote, deer, elk, fox, mountain lions, nuisance animals, pheasant, pronghorn antelope, turkey, as well as other wildlife species.



Working with livestock producers to resolve predator impacts to their operations is the largest component of the ADC portion of GFP's WDM program. High coyote populations and

large numbers of livestock across the state produced a significant demand for GFP's predator control services and resulted in a heavy workload to address



these requests. However, South Dakota experienced a harsh winter with deep snow, ice, and severe conditions in western and north-central South Dakota. These conditions made it difficult for staff



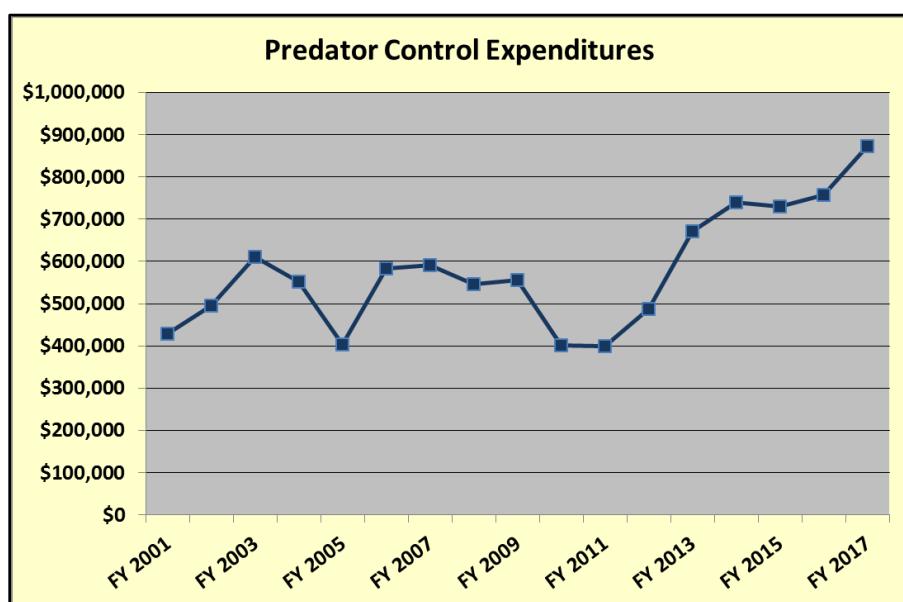
to effectively operate traditional ground equipment like traps or snares because the deep snow prohibited off-road travel in many areas. Additionally, USDA-WS's aerial predator control operations were grounded for several months, due to a crash-related fatality in another state. Nonetheless, wildlife damage staff responded to 1,164 requests for assistance regarding livestock loss and livestock protection from coyotes and fox, which directly impacted 901 livestock producers. Wildlife damage staff worked over 18,000 hours and drove nearly 275,000 miles to address these concerns. GFP also partnered with USDA-WS to fund a second aircraft for increased aerial predator control in eastern and central South Dakota. This second aircraft was stationed in Huron (January to May) and Pierre (June to January) and flew nearly 400 hours which allowed for more effective predator control and timely responses when addressing



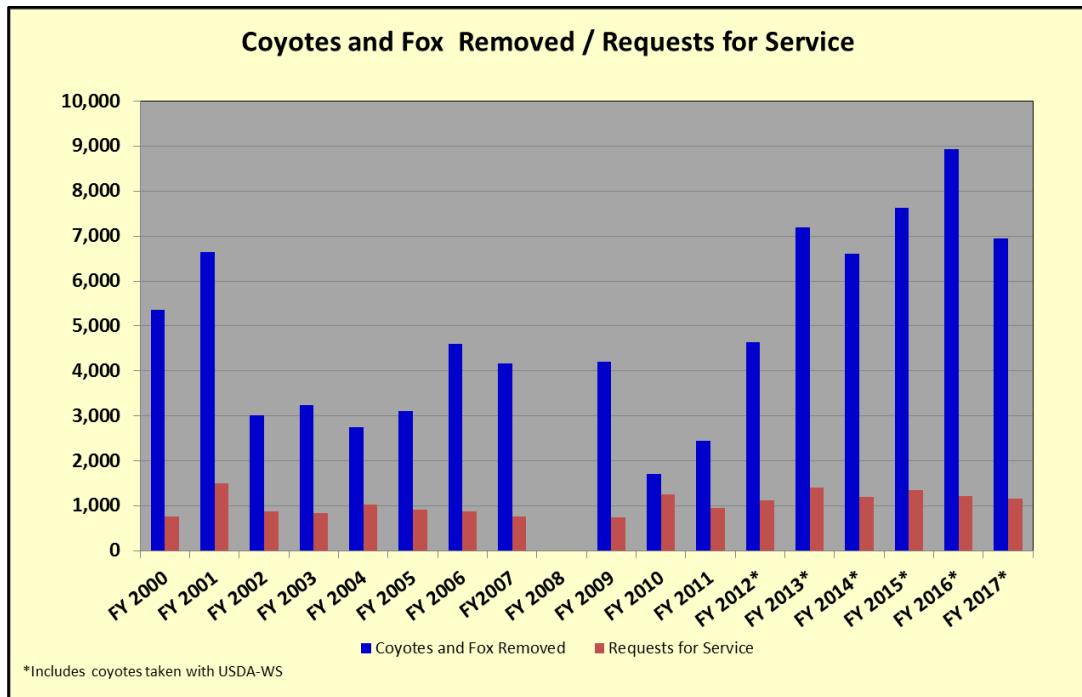
livestock loss events and livestock protection requests. In addition, GFP provided a total of \$7,000 of cooperative funding to six predator control districts [Campbell County, Edmunds County, Faulk County, McPherson County, Multi-County (Harding, Butte, and portions of Lawrence and Meade counties), and Perkins County] for additional aerial predator

control. These funds provided additional hours of aerial predator control above the level which predator control districts normally allocate, which were directed by local GFP wildlife damage staff. GFP also hired a temporary pilot from North Dakota this past winter to provide critical aerial predator control services when USDA-WS's planes were grounded. This aircraft removed over 400 coyotes and flew over 100 hours in western South Dakota. The Multi-County Predator Control district provided GFP with \$5,000 to help off-set the cost of this unanticipated expenditure.

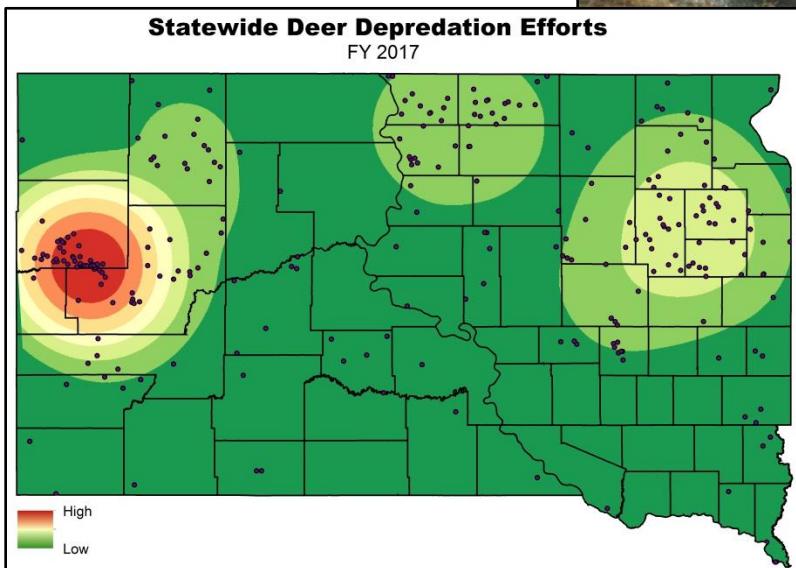
Total program expenditures this past year for predator control in South Dakota were \$873,315. Since 2001, GFP has spent nearly \$9 million on predator control to address livestock loss events and the protection of livestock. In 2017, while cooperatively working



with USDA-WS and local predator control districts, GFP removed 6,903 coyotes and fox.

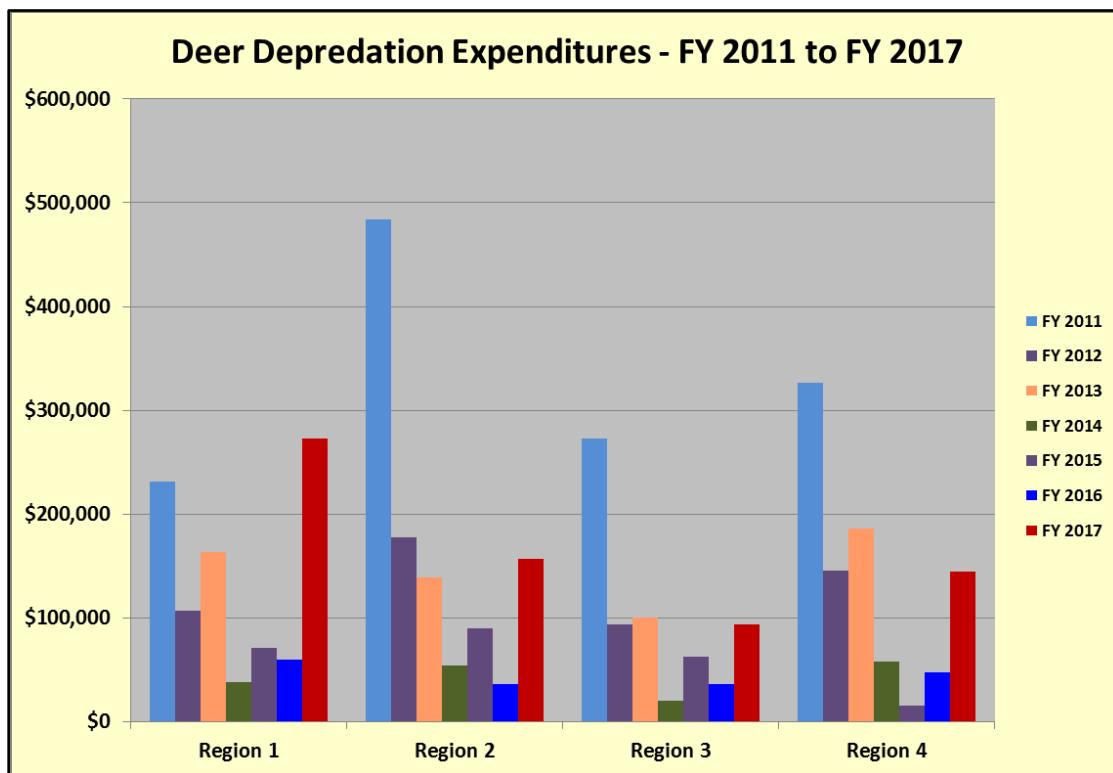


Local deer populations and winter weather events greatly affect the demands for deer damage abatement services. The winter of 2016-17 was severe in western and north-central South Dakota. These areas experienced extreme cold and deep snow until mid-February, which caused deer to congregate into large herds and move into farmyards for food and protection. Some areas experienced extreme deer damage to stored-feed supplies. The remainder of the state did not experience



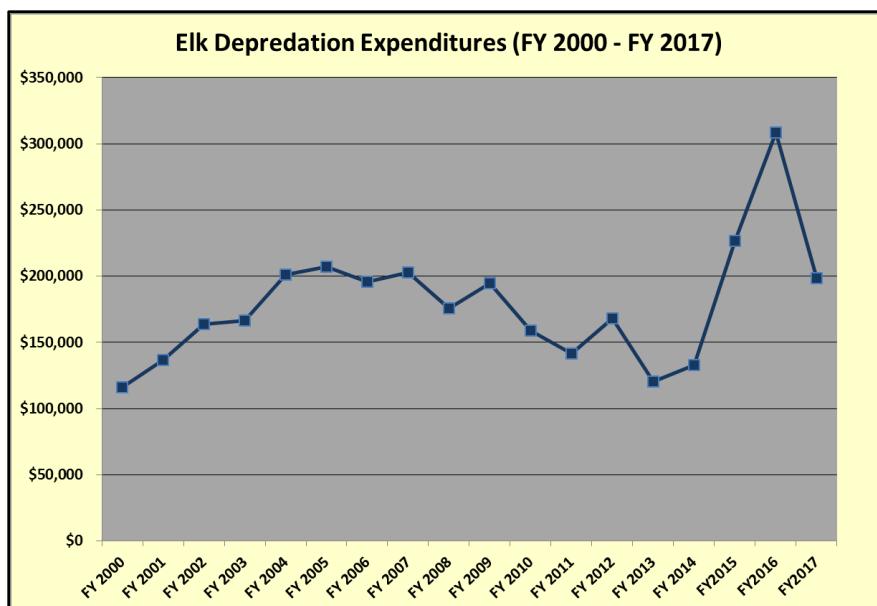
these harsh conditions for extended periods, and many of these other areas of South Dakota were at or below the management objectives for overall deer numbers. GFP spent considerable resources to address the deer damage issues across South Dakota. GFP responded to over 300 requests for assistance with deer damage to stored-feed supplies

and growing crops. GFP also authorized over 900 deer tags via depredation pool hunts, which occurred on 37 different farms and ranches, primarily in western South Dakota. Wildlife damage staff also initiated 21 stackyard or protective panel contracts to protect stored-feed supplies and 14 protective fencing projects to alleviate damage to tree plantings, commercial orchards, nurseries, and gardens. Staff drove more than 65,000 miles and worked more than 8,000 hours to address these concerns. In total, GFP spent \$676,792 to provide assistance to landowners with deer damage. By working cooperatively with the 293 impacted landowners, wildlife damage staff were able to resolve or minimize these conflicts. Over the past 15 years, GFP has spent considerable resources providing long-term solutions (i.e. protective stackyards and panels which permanently protect hay and stored-feed supplies) to address deer damage in many situations. These previous efforts combined with significant melting of snow in February kept expenditures from reaching the record-levels of the winter of 2011 where GFP expended over \$1 million to address deer damage issues. Deer depredation and the associated conflicts will continue to affect landowners now and into the future. GFP is committed to cooperatively working with private landowners to implement reasonable solutions to address future deer depredation conflicts. After soliciting feedback from landowners near the end of the fiscal year, GFP made several modifications to programs and services which are intended to provide more proactive solutions to deer depredation concerns in the coming year. GFP will be implementing a number of new strategies for the winter of 2017-18, and will continue to adapt programs and services to meet the needs of our constituents.



Local wildlife populations and weather play a very important role in the demands of the WDM program. At the same time, social acceptance levels of wildlife populations on the landscape also play a critical role in wildlife management. These dynamics exist in the Black

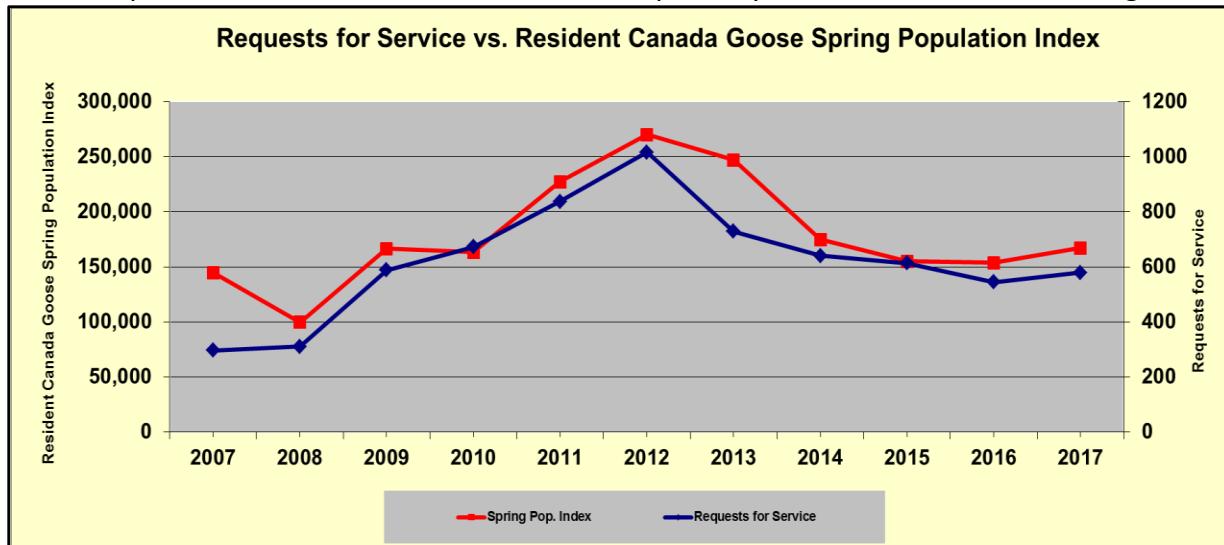
Hills and in several areas of the western prairie in regards to the management of elk. Wildlife damage staff responded to 78 requests for service regarding elk damage, primarily in and around the Black Hills area. Staff drove more than 5,000 miles and worked over 400 hours to address these landowner concerns. Many of these requests were addressed by utilizing food plot contracts or hayland contracts. There were 59 food plot and hayland contracts initiated in 2017 primarily to reduce elk depredation to growing alfalfa and other crops. Additionally, there were seven elk access contracts initiated, where elk hunting access on over 27,000 acres of private property was provided for hunters as well as assistance to landowners which are experiencing elk depredation. There were 37 elk harvested by hunters on these areas. Overall, GFP spent a total of \$198,544 for elk depredation assistance, statewide. This level of expenditures was lower than anticipated as GFP is actively managing for higher overall elk numbers in the Black Hills. However, GFP has enhanced several programs



to better address elk depredation within the past several years and these enhancements have made a difference with elk damage requests in some areas. The 2014 South Dakota Legislature approved a five-dollar increase (not to exceed \$10 total) to the non-refundable application fee for elk applicants in 2014. These fees are earmarked specifically

for elk depredation assistance to private landowners. Since 2000, GFP has spent more than \$3.2 million working cooperatively with private landowners to address elk depredation. While many of the current damage abatement practices have proven successful over the past 20 years, elk depredation and the associated conflicts will continue to affect landowners and challenge GFP. These matters are complex and not only involve the management of elk but also include social, economic, and political dynamics as well. However, GFP has a proven history of working with private landowners and is committed to cooperatively work with private landowners to implement reasonable solutions to address future elk depredation conflicts.

The spring weather experienced during 2017 was near normal. With an estimated resident Canada goose spring population index of approximately 167,000 birds, GFP responded to 579 requests for assistance. The total number of requests for assistance was down 43% compared to the record levels experienced in 2012. There is a strong linkage between the resident Canada goose population and the level of Canada goose damage abatement services that GFP provides to landowners. This relationship clearly demonstrates that when high



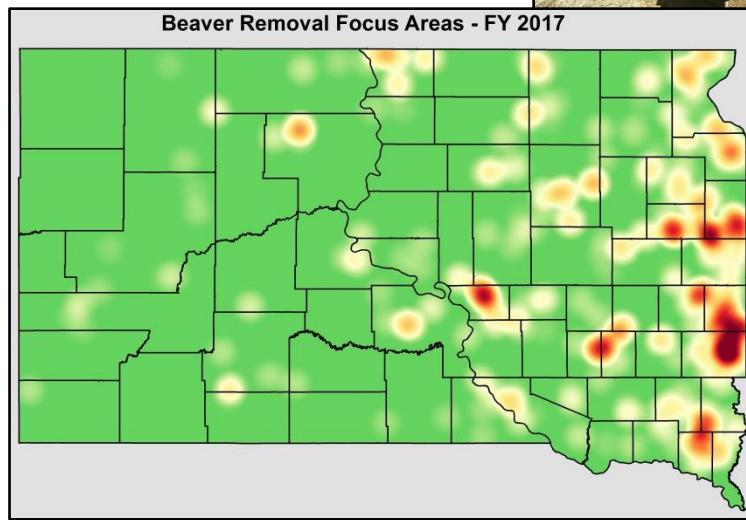
Canada goose numbers occur a larger number of producers are impacted. Due to the overall lower number of resident Canada geese that occurred in 2017, and the additional depredation tools that GFP has offered to landowners such as permits to kill small numbers of Canada geese that are causing crop damage, social tolerance levels for these birds has increased. Cooperating landowners have a tool in-hand that allows them to protect their crops when these birds cause damage. Four hundred and fourteen private landowners worked cooperatively with GFP to haze and remove Canada geese from areas where crop damage was occurring. These actions were authorized by GFP through their USFWS Special Canada Goose Permit. These permitted landowners took a total of 1,129 Canada geese during this cooperative effort. While the number of birds removed by permitted landowners does not have an impact on the overall population, this management tool is critical to successfully engage landowners and assist GFP with hazing efforts. Additionally, by having this tool available, it greatly assisted in the ability to increase the population objective to a range of 115,000 to 165,000 birds in the 2016 Canada Goose Management Plan, compared to the previous population objective of 80,000 to 90,000 birds.

While landowner permits greatly help to reduce Canada goose damage to crops in some areas, there are still many situations which require additional damage abatement techniques



implemented by GFP staff to reduce crop damage. All requests for assistance involved damage to growing-season crops (primarily soybeans). GFP staff worked with 492 landowners to provide crop protection from Canada goose damage. Staff drove more than 33,000 miles and worked more than 6,800 hours to respond to these concerns. Wildlife damage staff also addled 415 Canada goose nests which greatly reduced crop damage in several localized areas as well as reduced staff time and effort. GFP initiated 33 buffer-strip and food plot contracts which are designed to minimize goose damage to cropfields located near edges of wetlands. Overall, the total program expenditures for Canada goose depredation assistance were \$223,467 in 2017. Since 2000, GFP has spent more than \$6.1 million cooperatively working with private landowners to address Canada goose damage to growing crops.

Requests from producers and landowners with beaver damage were similar when compared to last year. Wildlife damage staff responded to 384 requests for assistance with beaver damage where they removed a total of 1,087 beaver across South Dakota. Most of this work occurred in the eastern one-third of South Dakota where many riparian areas exist as well as lakes and other wetlands. Most types of damage consisted of the flooding of crops, damage to trees



used as wind-breaks for over-wintering livestock, ornamental trees near homes, and damage to roads and livestock dams. Staff assisted 317 different landowners with beaver damage concerns. They drove over 73,000 miles and worked more than 5,700 hours to handle these problems throughout

South Dakota. Total program expenditures were \$213,803.

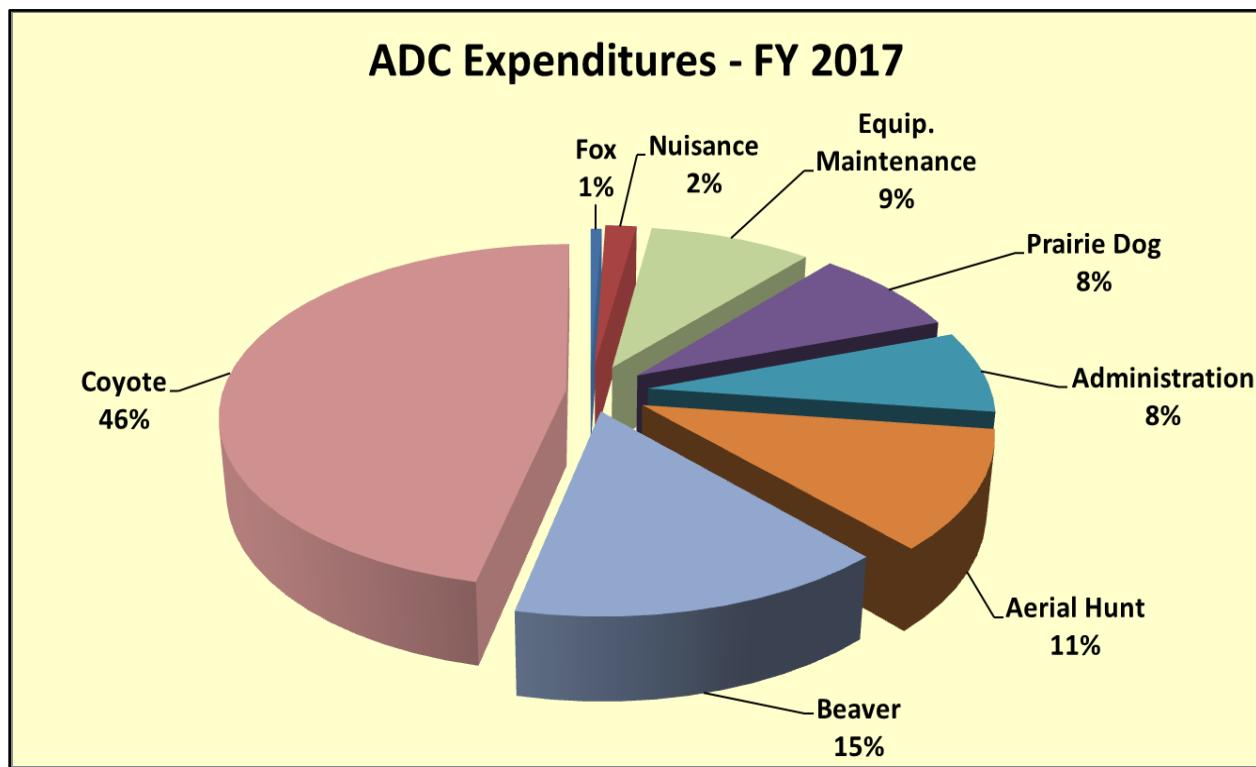
Wildlife damage staff also responded to 61 requests for assistance with nuisance species such as raccoons, badger, skunk, and mink. Most requests were handled with technical advice or loaner-traps. However, staff did provide direct control in some situations. GFP staff drove over 9,000 miles and worked nearly 500 hours to address these complaints. Additionally, wildlife damage staff and GFP contractors controlled over 5,000 acres of prairie dogs that had encroached on to private land from adjacent public land. Prairie dog colonies expanded substantially compared to 2016 and resulted in an increased workload. This increased demand

for assistance with prairie dog encroachment from adjacent public land resulted in a program expenditure of nearly \$117,000.

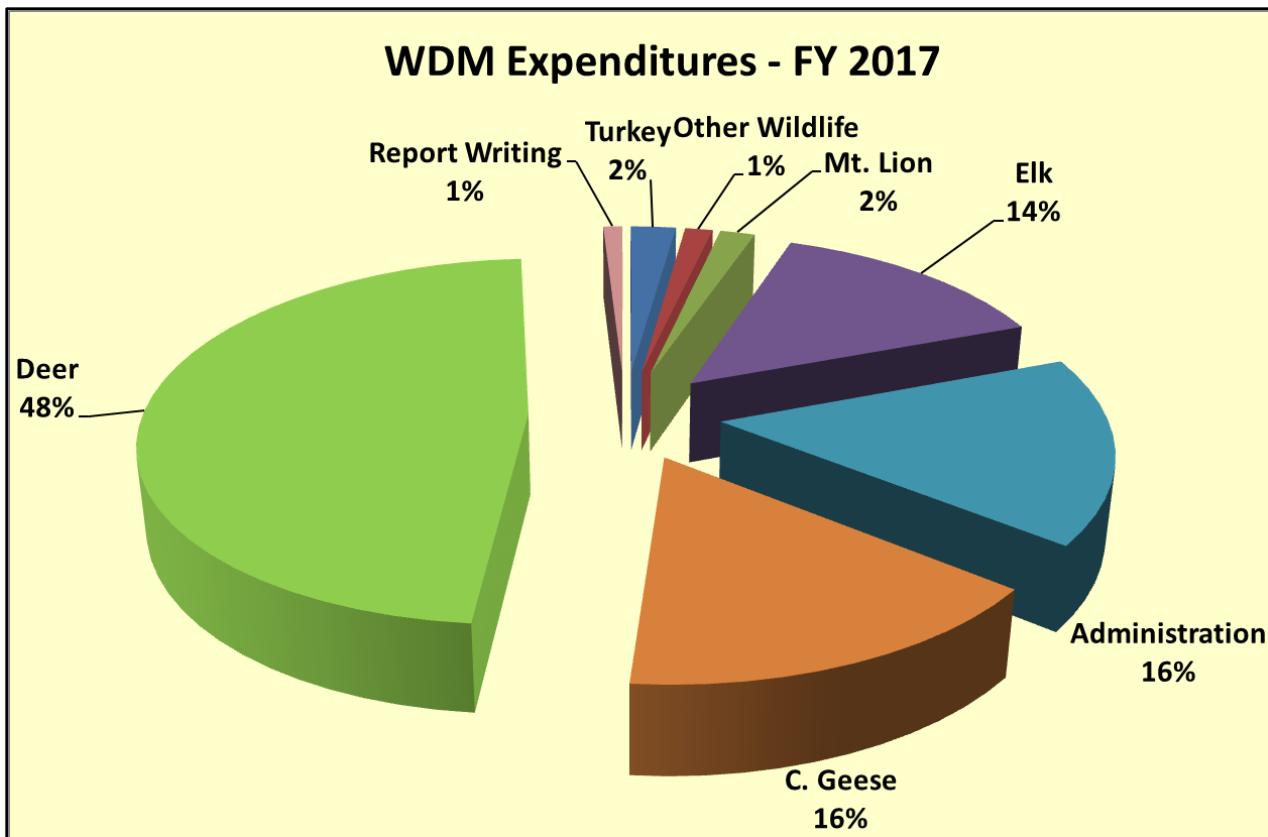
Wildlife damage staff responded to 32 requests for assistance involving turkey issues across South Dakota. Turkey numbers throughout South Dakota are at or below management objectives in most areas and as such, the demand for turkey depredation services was similar to previous year's efforts. GFP staff worked more than 900 hours to address these concerns. Statewide, program expenditures for staff time, mileage, materials and equipment totaled more than \$31,000. Wildlife damage staff also responded to many other requests for assistance involving other wildlife species. Additionally, wildlife damage staff responded to six reports of livestock loss as well as public safety threats due to mountain lions. Wildlife damage staff worked over 500 hours to address these concerns. The statewide total program expenditure for mountain lion control was more than \$24,000.

Partnerships are an extremely important component of the WDM program and are critical to the program's success. Each year, GFP's wildlife damage staff works cooperatively with landowners and producers to reduce or alleviate human-wildlife conflicts. Partnerships also exist with other state and federal agencies as well as local predator control districts and all play an important role in the work that we accomplish.

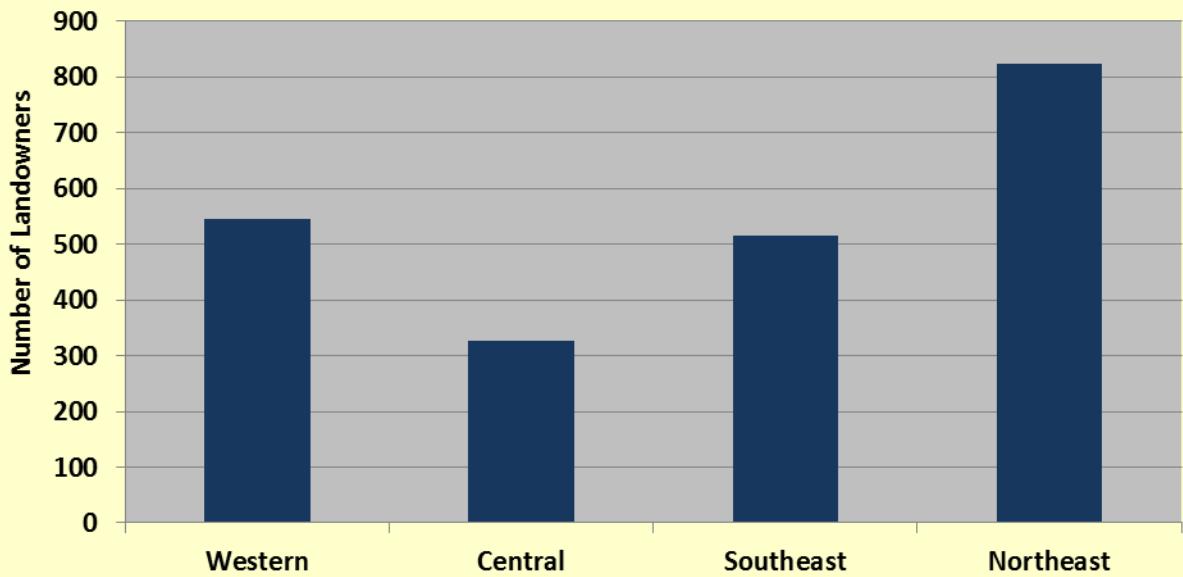
Overall, the ADC portion of the WDM program had a total expenditure of \$1,532,842 statewide. Wildlife damage staff drove more than 400,000 miles and worked more than 32,000 hours to address these 1,659 requests for assistance, which directly impacted 1,326 producers and landowners.



Overall, the statewide WDM portion of the program had a total expenditure of \$1,471,440. GFP staff worked more than 23,000 hours to address these 979 requests for assistance, which directly impacted 882 producers and landowners.

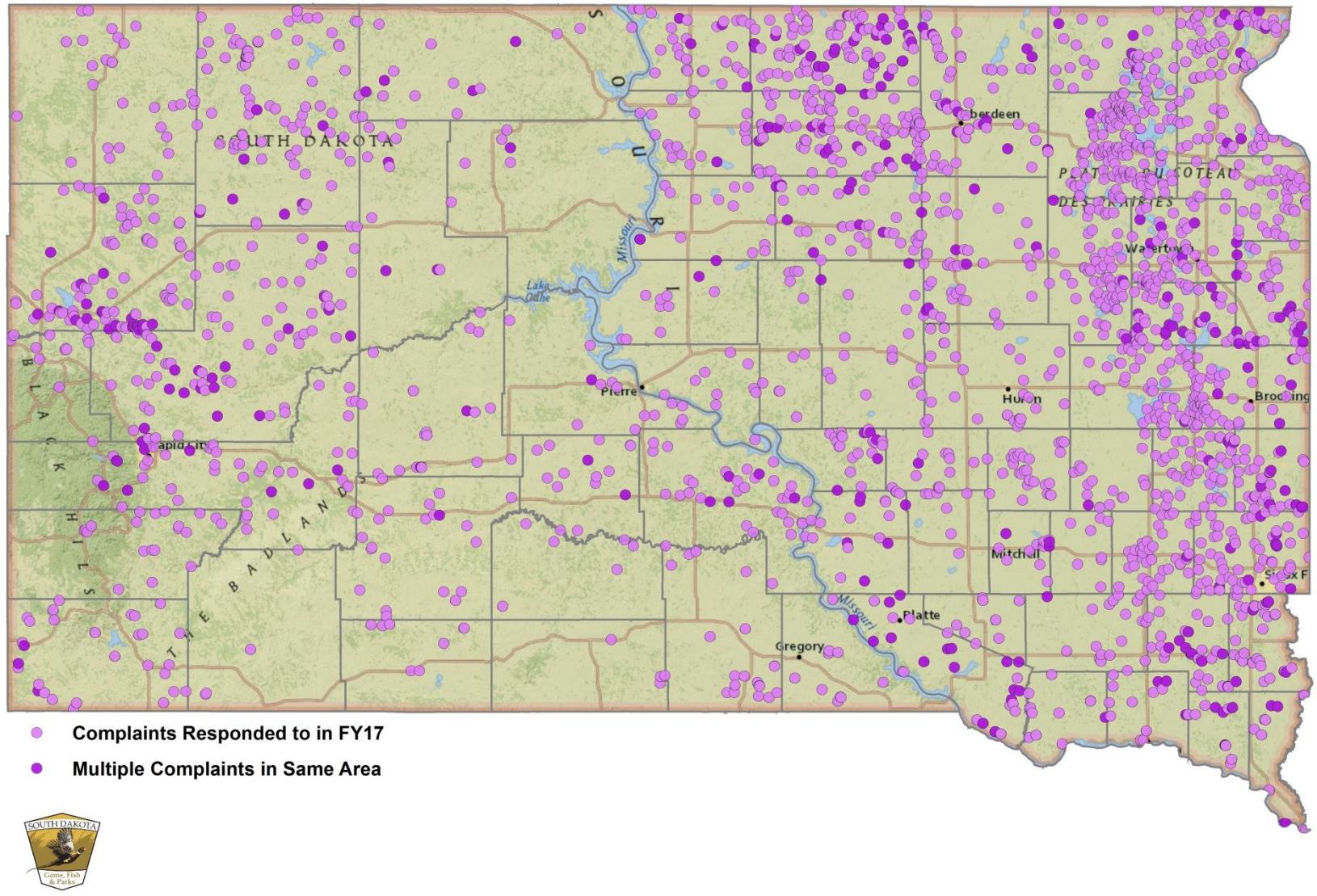


Number of Landowners Receiving WDM/ADC Program Services - FY 2017

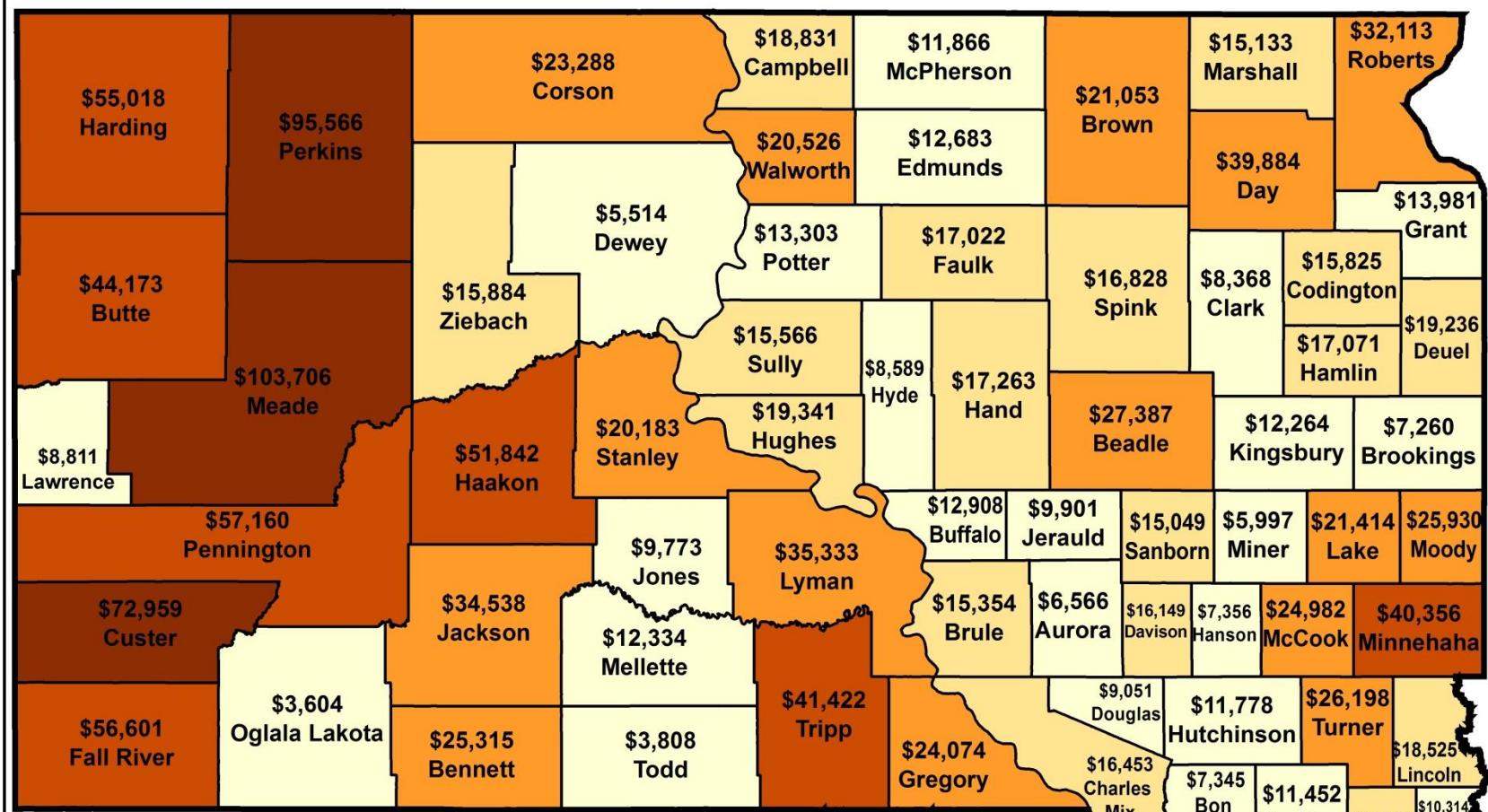


In summary, GFP responded to a total of 2,688 requests for assistance within the entire WDM program (i.e. ADC and WDM combined) during fiscal year 2017, which directly impacted 2,211 landowners and producers in South Dakota. The total program expenditures including staff time, mileage, equipment and materials totaled \$3,004,282.

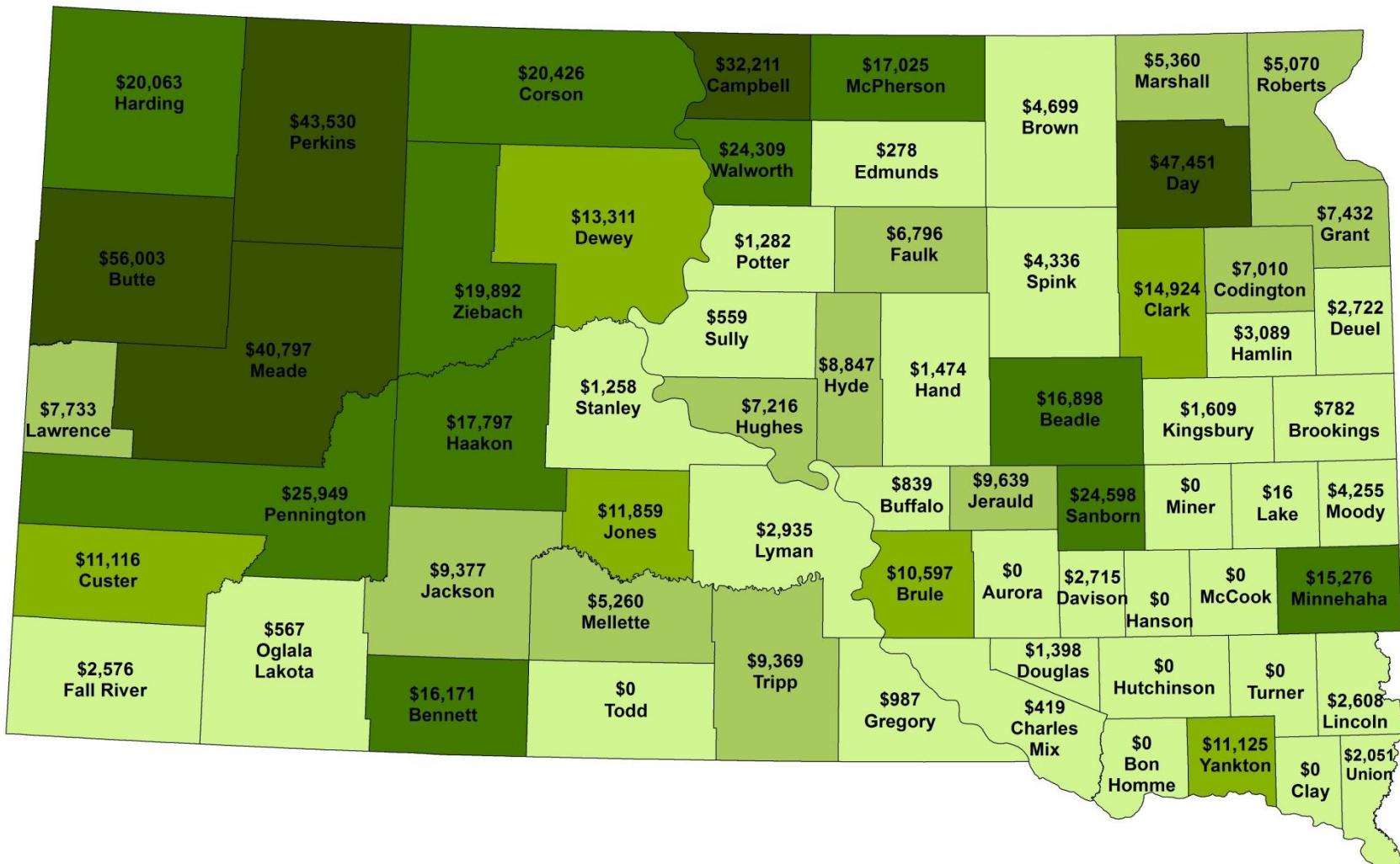
Statewide WDM & ADC Activities - FY 2017



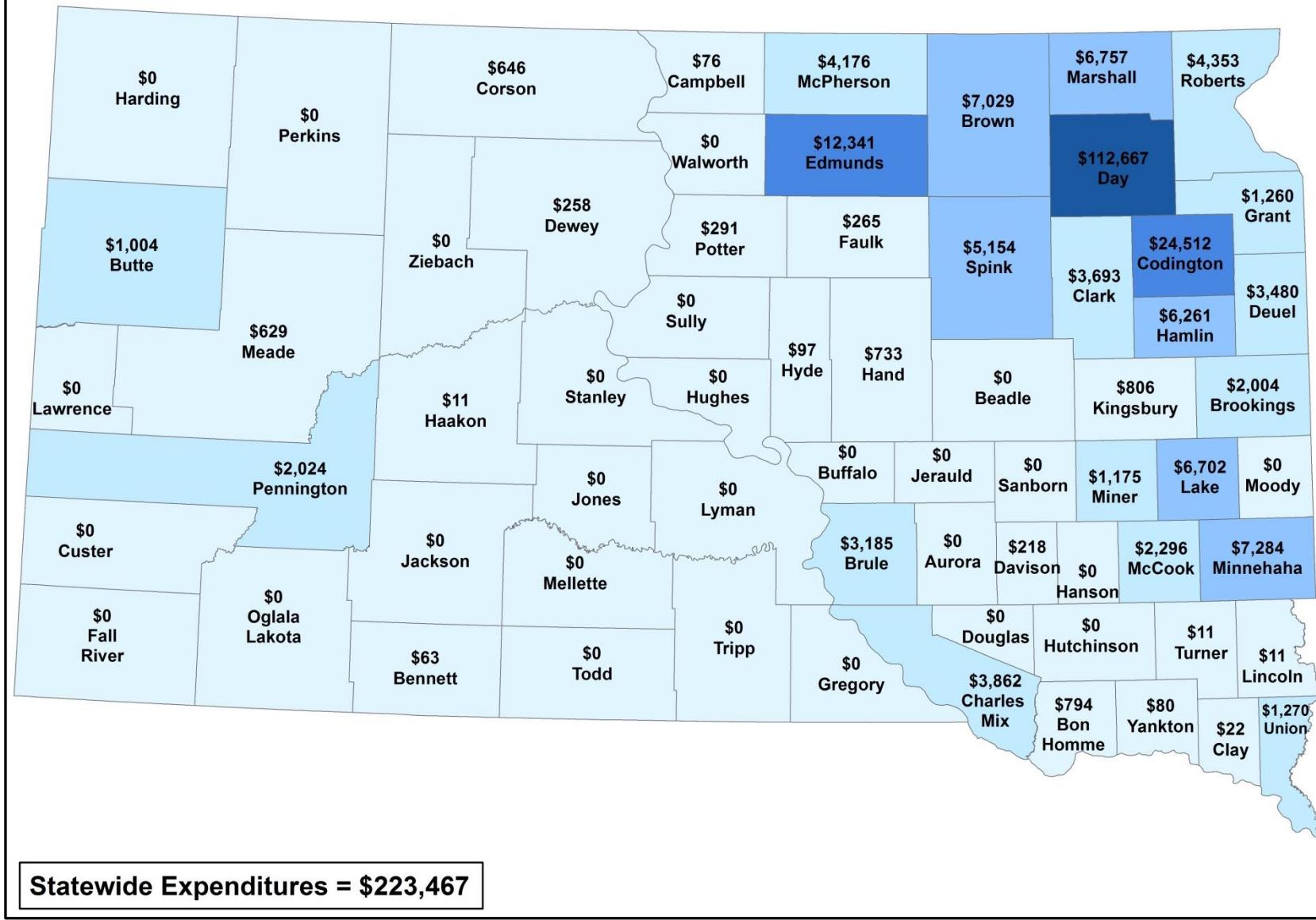
ADC Expenditures - FY 2017



FY 2017 - Deer Depredation Expenditures



FY 2017 - Canada Goose Depredation Expenditures



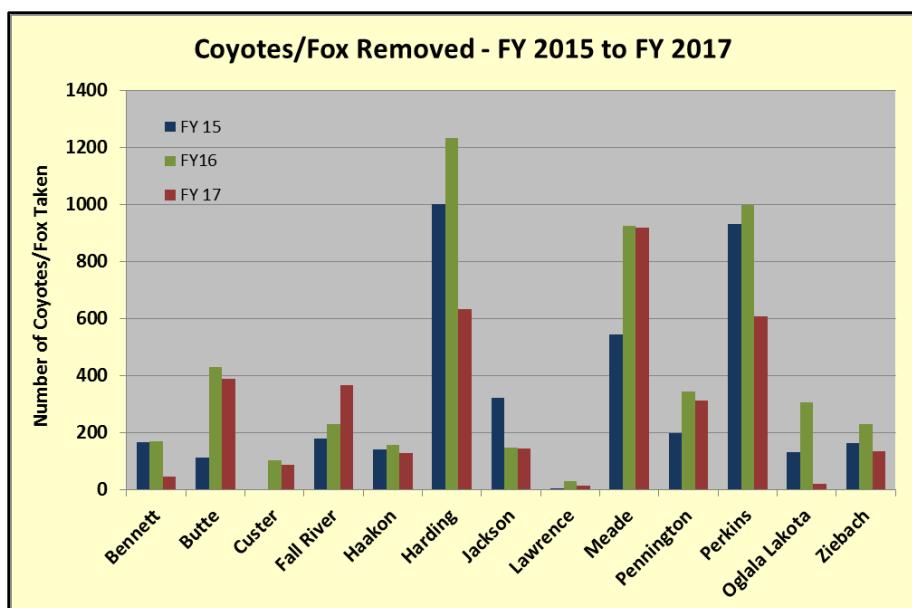
Region 1 – Program Report

Region 1 encompasses roughly the western one-third of South Dakota. The landscape is very diverse and consists of large expansive rolling grasslands with buttes, the Black Hills national forest, rugged river drainages, badlands, as well as some croplands. Wildlife species are abundant

and include most big game species, furbearers, upland game species, as well as, waterfowl. The region consists of 13 counties and has eight field positions (wildlife damage specialists) and one supervisory position. Region 1 is unique that wildlife conservation officers assist with the delivery of some of the WDM programs and services such as elk and deer depredation assistance. With a large percentage of South Dakota's sheep producers occurring within this region, the primary job duties for most field staff

revolve around the protection of livestock from predators but also include beaver control and under certain weather conditions assistance with deer, elk, pronghorn-antelope and turkey depredation. GFP also works with a private contractor to control prairie dogs on private lands that have been encroached from adjacent public lands.

Coyote populations in Region 1 have increased from the past few years based upon the number of coyotes removed as well as field reports. Livestock numbers were high and the demand for predator control from livestock producers was significant. The total number of requests for assistance with predator control was similar to the previous year. Wildlife damage staff responded to 363 requests for assistance due to livestock losses caused from predators (i.e. coyote and fox) and worked with 261 livestock producers across the region to address these concerns. GFP has a great relationship with several predator control districts in western South Dakota and works cooperatively to address livestock losses. GFP provided a



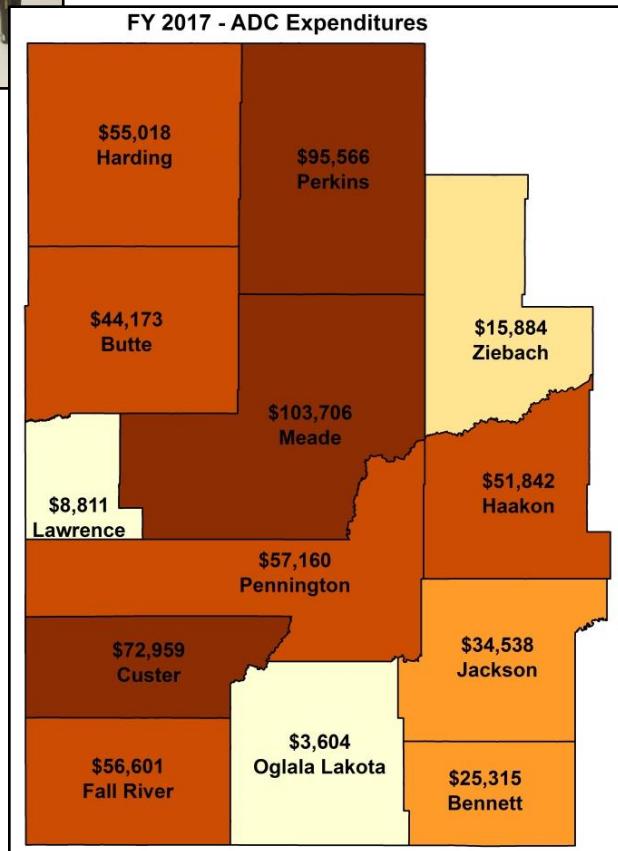
total of \$3,000 of cooperative funding to the Perkins County Predator Control District and the Multi-County Predator Control District (Harding, Butte, and part of Lawrence and Meade counties) for additional aerial predator control services. These funds provided additional hours of aerial predator control within these counties, which were directed by local GFP wildlife damage staff. Wildlife damage staff in cooperation with USDA-Wildlife Services took 3,794 coyotes and fox and

drove more than 125,000 miles and worked 8,429 hours to address these concerns. The total cost of predator control in Region 1 was \$392,634.



damage where they removed 80 beaver and assisted 26 different landowners. Requests for assistance primarily involved damage to trees used as wind-breaks to over-winter cattle and dams used for livestock watering. GFP also responded to several nuisance species (i.e. raccoon and skunk) requests for assistance. Wildlife damage staff drove over 8,600 miles and worked nearly 700 hours to address these issues. Total program expenditures were \$24,422.

The spring started off very dry in western South Dakota and prairie dog colonies expanded. GFP saw a substantial increase from last year in regards to the number of landowners requesting assistance as well as the overall number of acres of prairie dog colonies that were controlled. GFP controlled over 5,000 acres of prairie dogs which is the highest amount since 2010. However, plague is still prevalent in many areas and the effects of previous control efforts have kept overall encroachment issues much lower than the record levels of the late-2000's. Forty-eight landowners received prairie dog control services due to encroachment from adjacent public lands. GFP spent \$105,610 to control prairie dog expansion where private lands were encroached from public land. The utilization of zinc-phosphide treated oats (i.e. poison oats) was used as the primary control technique.



Overall, the ADC portion of the WDM program had a total expenditure of \$625,177 in Region 1. Wildlife damage staff drove more than 134,000 miles and worked more than 11,000 hours to address the 431 requests for assistance, which directly impacted 328 producers and landowners.

The winter during 2017 was severe in many areas of Region 1 and the demand for wildlife depredation assistance for deer, elk, and turkey depredation was substantial. White-tailed deer



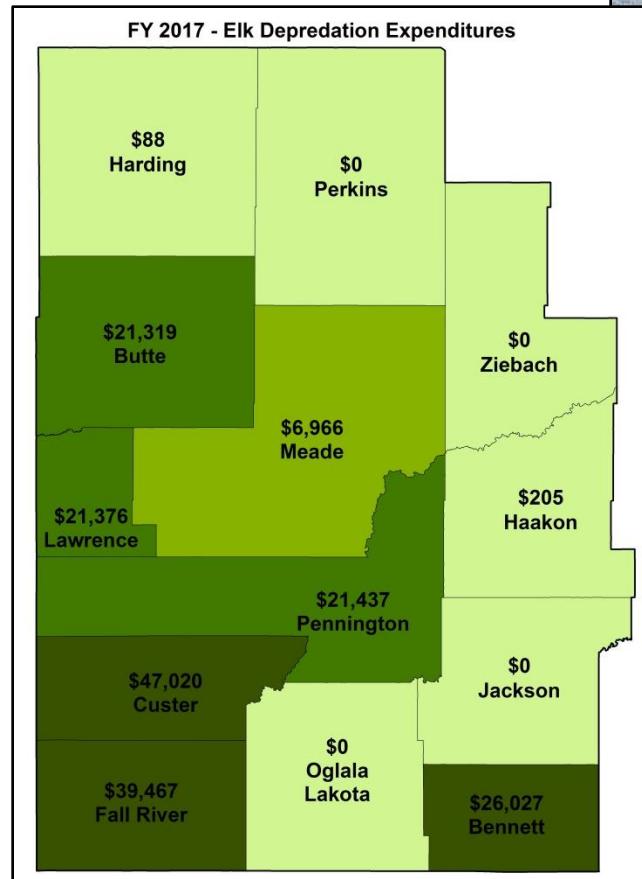
populations continue to be at or slightly above management objectives in the northern one-half of Region 1 and slightly below in the southern one-half. These higher populations coupled with deep snow and extreme cold forced deer to move into farmyards for shelter and food. The areas along the Belle Fourche River were some of the hardest impacted areas in the state. Staff responded to 138 requests for assistance with deer damage throughout the region and worked more than 3,200 hours to address these concerns. For comparison, in 2016 GFP staff only responded to 16 requests for assistance with deer damage. GFP authorized over 800 depredation pool hunt tags on 34 different farms and ranches to help reduce the overall number of deer at damage locations as well as serve as an important hazing tool. There were also seven stackyard contracts and two

protective fencing contracts implemented with a cost of \$42,000. GFP spent a total of \$272,503 working with 106 different landowners and producers within Region 1 to provide deer damage assistance regarding white-tailed deer and mule deer. For fiscal year 2018, additional proactive efforts are underway so if these same circumstances are experienced, the impacts can be lessened. One important element is having additional deer harvest in hunting units that are above management objectives, this will occur during the 2017 deer hunting seasons as the number of tags in these areas were increased.



As indicated in the 2014 Elk Management Plan, GFP plans to manage for higher elk populations in most hunting units in the Black Hills. In a 2013 survey of landowners, GFP found that 38% of landowners indicated that their tolerance levels for more elk would increase if GFP enhanced its depredation abatement services. With plans to manage for more elk, GFP also enhanced existing programs and added programs regarding elk depredation assistance to better meet the demand of landowners and producers that experience impacts from elk. The changes included increased payments for cooperative food plots, stackyards, and offering hayland contracts for damage to hay fields. Region 1 staff responded to 78 requests for service regarding elk, primarily in and around the Black Hills area and Bennett County. Staff drove over 5,000 miles

and worked 400 hours to address these landowner concerns. Many of these requests were addressed by utilizing contracts for food plots and hayland areas that experience elk usage. There were 59 food plot contracts and hayland contracts initiated in 2017 primarily to address elk depredation to actively growing alfalfa, growing crops and hayland areas.



This was an increase over the past few years and largely linked to GFP's effort to increase social tolerance as we manage for higher elk numbers in most hunting units. Additionally, there were seven elk access contracts initiated, where elk hunting access on over 27,000 acres of private property was provided for hunters (there were 37 elk harvested on these areas) as well as assistance to landowners which were experiencing elk depredation. Overall, GFP spent a total of more than \$183,000 for elk depredation assistance, in Region 1.

Lower turkey populations in the Black Hills as well as many hunting units on the prairie resulted in a smaller workload regarding assistance with turkey depredation. Region 1 wildlife damage staff responded to twelve requests for assistance with turkey depredation. In most cases, these requests were related to damage to stored-feed supplies which involved large concentrations of turkeys. Staff worked over 300 hours to address these concerns with a total program cost of \$14,084. GFP utilized trap and relocation efforts as a management approach in several situations, as there are large amounts of public land in the Black Hills with many areas that are suitable for release sites that will not impact private properties. GFP also worked with the city of Rapid City to implement several management techniques regarding urban Canada geese at Canyon Lake Park and the Rapid City airport as well as worked with the city to address urban deer issues.



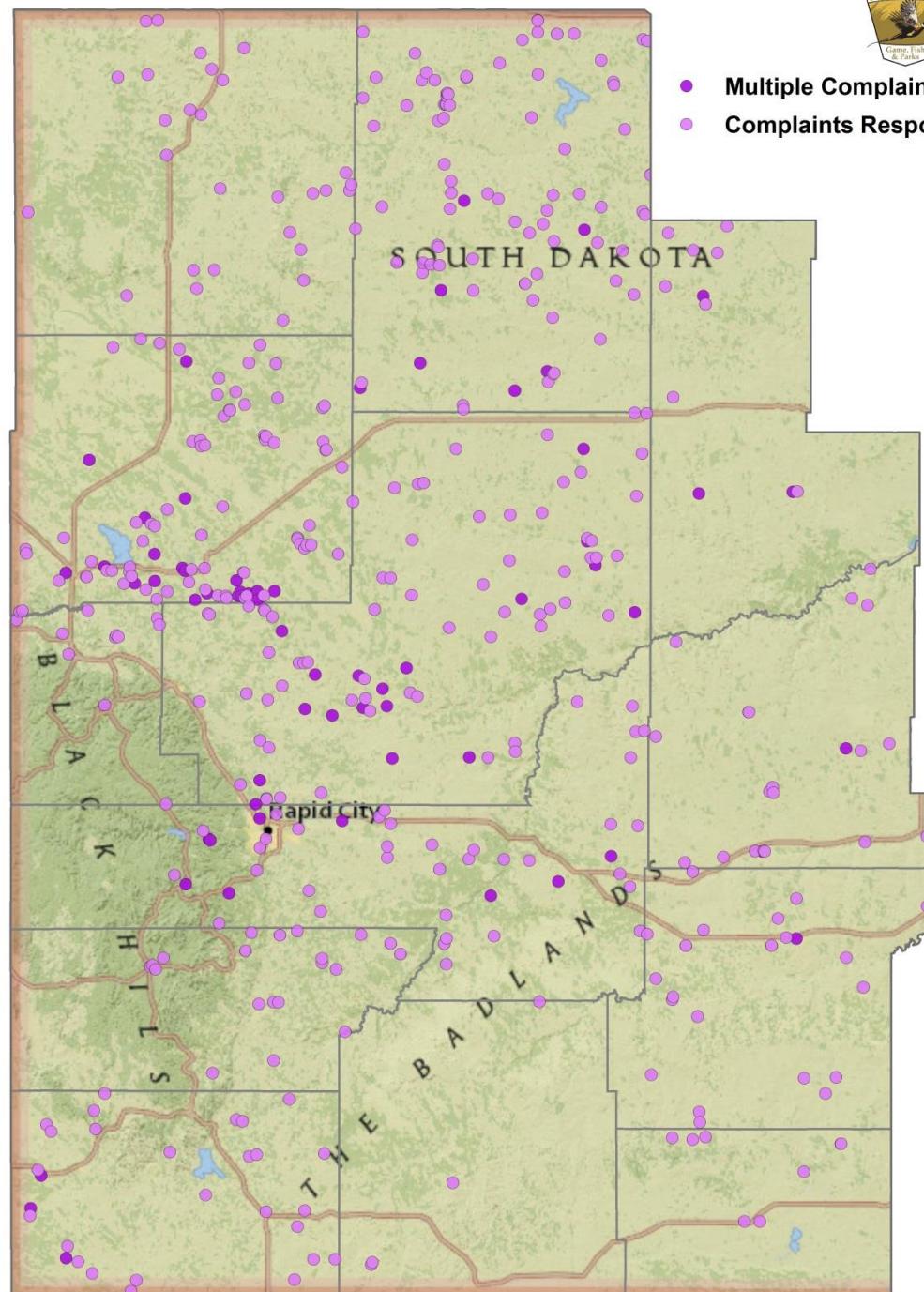
Region 1 also has one wildlife damage specialist specifically responsible for responding to calls regarding mountain lions and livestock loss as well as public safety threats. Wildlife damage staff responded to six calls, a substantial decrease from previous years and worked 495 hours with a total program cost of \$21,936.

In summary, GFP responded to a total of 687 requests for assistance within the entire WDM program which directly impacted 545 landowners and producers in Region 1. The total program expenditures including staff time, mileage, equipment and materials totaled \$1,229,237.

Region 1 Wildlife Damage Management Activities - FY 2017



- Multiple Complaints in Same Area
- Complaints Responded to in FY17



Region 2 – Program Report

Region 2 is located within the central portion of South Dakota and consists of 20 counties most of which border the Missouri River. The terrain varies greatly and includes rough river breaks, expansive grasslands, as well as significant acreages of cropland. Wildlife species are abundant and include white-tailed deer, mule deer, pronghorn antelope, upland game, waterfowl, turkeys, furbearers, and a few elk. Region 2 has seven field positions (wildlife damage specialists) and one supervisory position. Primary job duties for most field staff revolve around the protection of livestock from predators and assistance with deer depredation. Additionally, these duties include beaver and prairie dog control and assistance with turkey, Canada goose, and elk depredation.

The winter weather during 2017 was severe and the northern portion of Region 2 experienced extreme cold and deep snow (over 50 inches) for several months. Deer populations were at or below management objectives in most areas, as a result of impacts from Epizootic

Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) a few years ago. Nonetheless, these harsh winter conditions congregated deer into large herds and were then forced into farmyards for food and shelter in many areas. Unfortunately, some areas experienced significant deer damage to stored-feed supplies. Wildlife damage staff responded to 42 requests for assistance dealing with white-tailed deer and mule deer throughout the region. This volume of requests for service was nearly double the number in 2016. Most

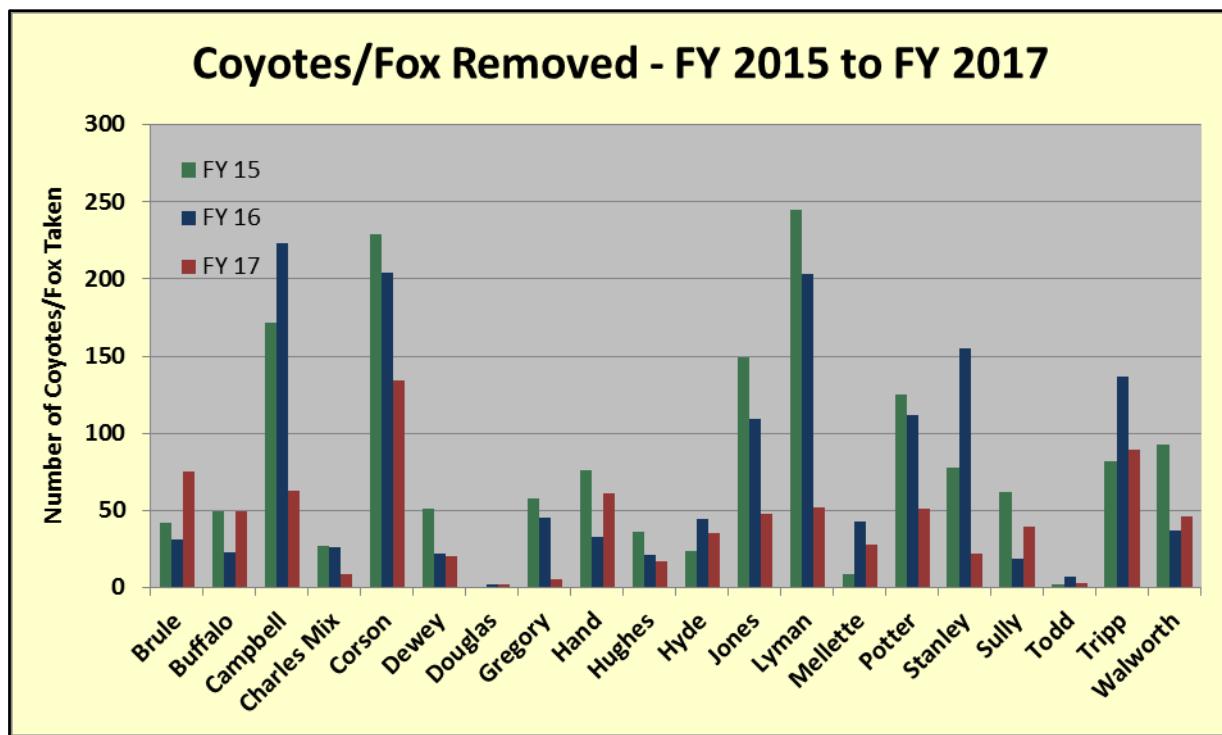


requests involved the protection of stored-feed supplies. Wildlife damage staff worked more than 2,000 hours to address these concerns. Staff also initiated nine stackyard contracts and five protective fencing contracts with landowners to protect stored-feed supplies and commercial gardens or orchards. Overall, the total program expenditures were \$156,583, more than four times the amount expended in 2016.

While these efforts were substantial, lower deer numbers across the Region and good snow-melting conditions in February kept expenditures from approaching the records levels experienced during the winter of 2010-11.



The coyote population in central South Dakota seemed to be slightly decreasing or stable as wildlife damage staff responded to 32% less requests for service than in 2016. Large numbers of livestock occur throughout the region and the demand for predator control from livestock producers was present. Wildlife damage staff responded to 242 requests for assistance due to livestock loss from predators (i.e. coyote and fox). Staff worked with 193 livestock producers across the region to address these concerns. Additionally, GFP provided \$1,000 of cooperative funding to the Campbell County Predator Control District for increased aerial predator control which was directed by local GFP wildlife damage staff. In cooperation with USDA-Wildlife Services, wildlife damage staff took 848 coyotes and fox, drove 51,150 miles, and worked 3,993 hours to address these concerns. Total expenditures for predator control in Region 2 were \$180,283.



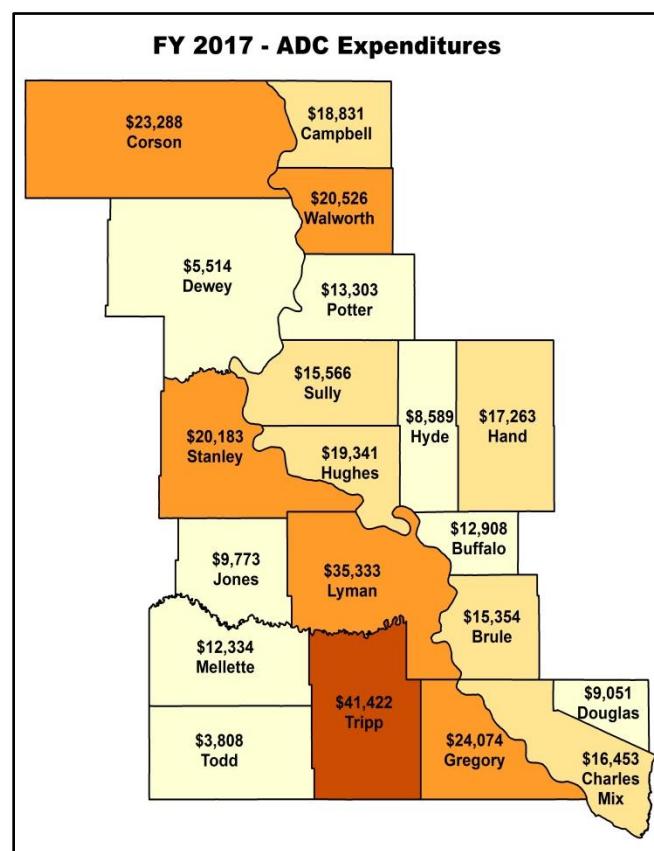
Wildlife damage staff also responded to 91 requests for assistance regarding beaver control where staff removed 284 beaver. Most beaver damage occurred near larger riparian areas and the volume of workload was similar to last year. Most calls involved damage to trees used as wind-breaks for livestock protection and damage to livestock dams. Wildlife damage staff drove a total of 20,327 miles and worked 1,716 hours to address these concerns which directly impacted 72 different landowners in Region 2. Total program expenditures were \$61,871.

GFP also responded to nine requests for assistance involving nuisance species (i.e. raccoon, skunk, and mink). Most requests were handled with technical assistance; however, staff did provide direct assistance with some requests. Wildlife damage staff drove a total of 1,356 miles and worked 105 hours to address these issues. Total program expenditures were over \$4,300. Region 2 wildlife damage staff also controlled prairie dogs on 34 acres of private land which were encroached from adjacent public land. Overall, the ADC portion of the WDM program had a total expenditure of \$342,914 in Region 2. Wildlife damage staff drove more than 86,000 miles and worked more than 8,100 hours to address the 336 requests for assistance, which directly impacted 266 producers and landowners.

As Canada geese and row crops continue to expand westward in eastern South Dakota, Region 2 wildlife damage specialists have seen an increased demand for assistance over previous years. Region 2 wildlife damage staff responded to seven requests for assistance with Canada goose damage to growing crops. These requests occurred primarily on the eastern edge of Region 2, where more wetland and crop interspersion occur. Staff worked 219 hours to address these concerns with a total program expenditure of \$9,148.

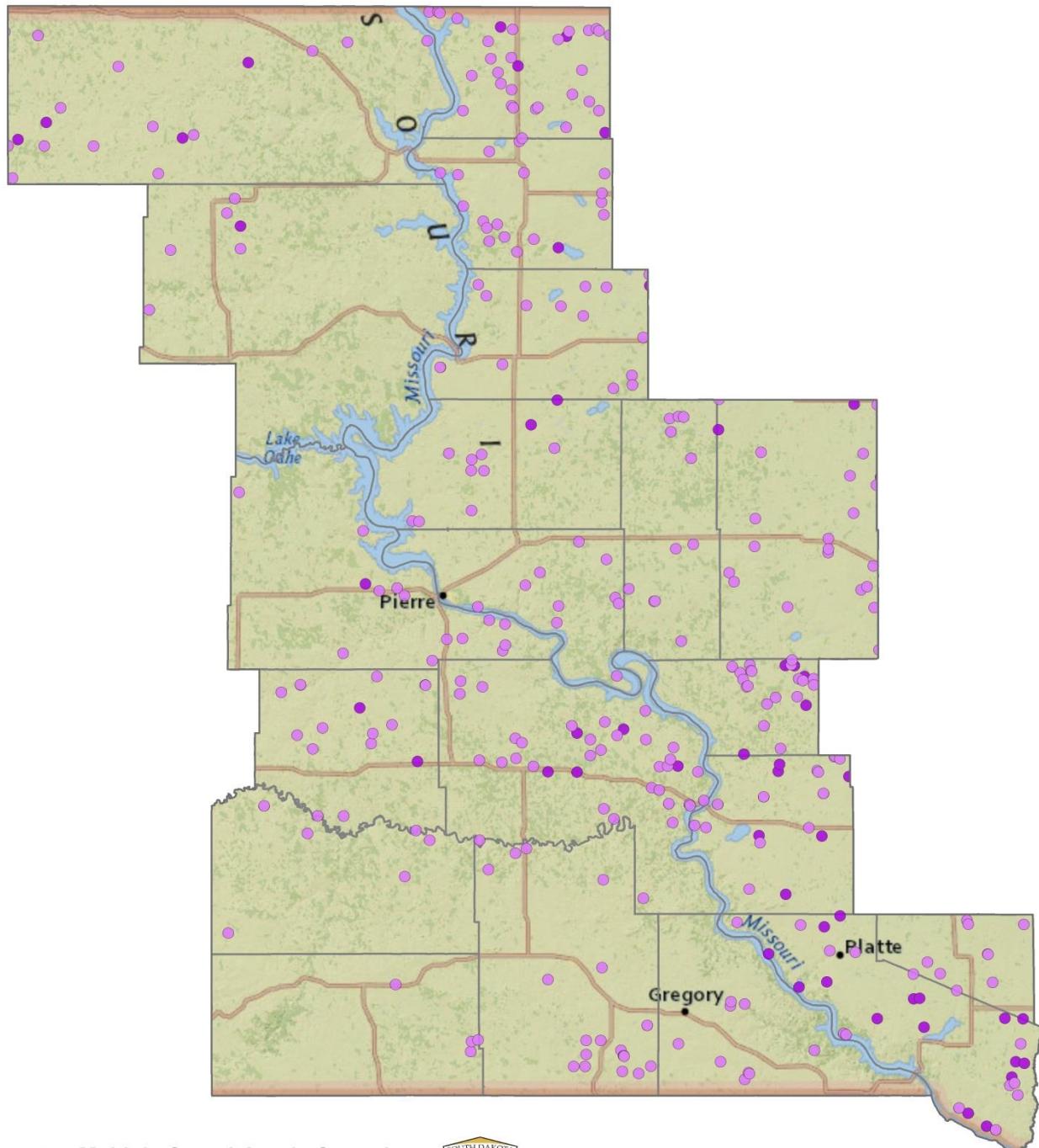


In summary, GFP responded to a total of **397 requests for assistance** within the entire WDM program which directly impacted **326 landowners and producers** in Region 2. The total program expenditures including staff time, mileage, and equipment and materials totaled **\$583,921**.



Wildlife damage staff responded to only a handful of requests for assistance involving turkey damage to stored-feed supplies due to lower turkey numbers throughout the area.

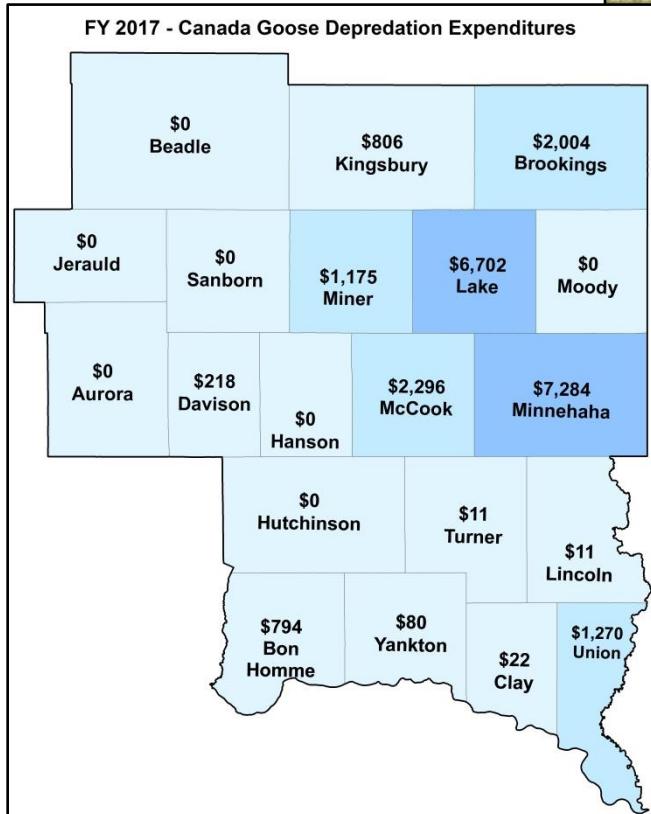
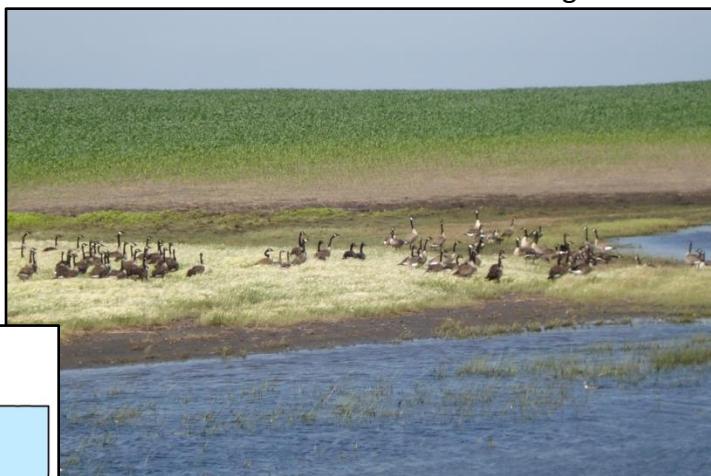
Region 2 Wildlife Damage Management Activities - FY 2017



Region 3 – Program Report

Region 3 is located in the southeastern portion of South Dakota and consists of 20 counties. The landscape varies and includes croplands, grasslands, wetlands, and river drainages, but croplands dominate the majority of the counties within Region 3. Wildlife species are abundant and includes white-tailed deer, a few mule deer, upland game, waterfowl, furbearers, and turkeys. The Region has six field positions (wildlife damage specialists) and one supervisory position. Primary job duties for most field staff revolve around assistance with Canada goose depredation, the protection of livestock from predators, beaver control as well as deer and turkey depredation assistance.

The weather during the spring of 2017 was near normal, if not drier. Resident Canada goose numbers were abundant and combined with commodity



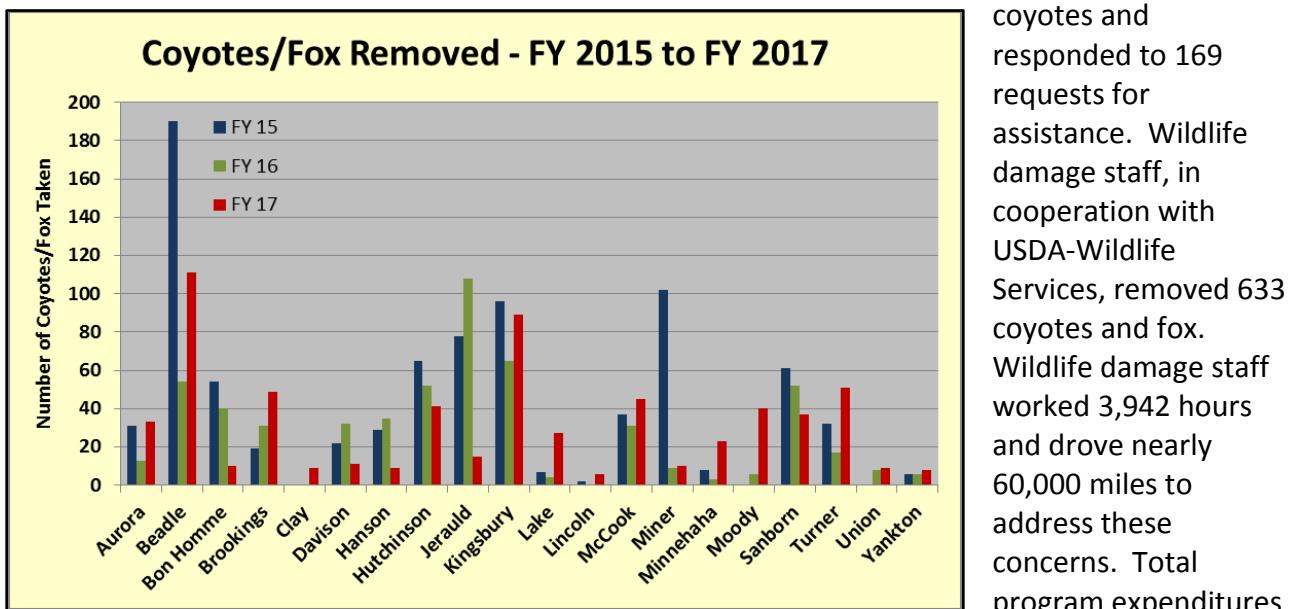
181 landowner permits to remove small numbers of geese from areas of crop damage. Staff worked nearly 700 hours to respond to these requests. Region 3 wildlife damage staff also addled 415 Canada goose nests, which greatly reduced crop damage in those localized areas and

prices, produced a lower amount of requests for assistance from landowners compared to previous years. GFP staff worked directly with 191 landowners and responded to 192 requests for assistance regarding Canada goose damage to growing-season crops (primarily soybeans). This workload has decreased from previous years and a critical management tool that has assisted with that decrease was the issuance of



resulted in reduced staff time and effort. Overall, the total program expenditures were \$25,804. The expenditure to deliver Canada goose damage abatement programs and services was the lowest in over a decade.

Abundant coyote populations and large numbers of livestock created a demand for predator control in Region 3. The number of requests for assistance with coyotes was similar to 2016. Staff worked with 144 livestock producers to reduce or alleviate livestock loss due to



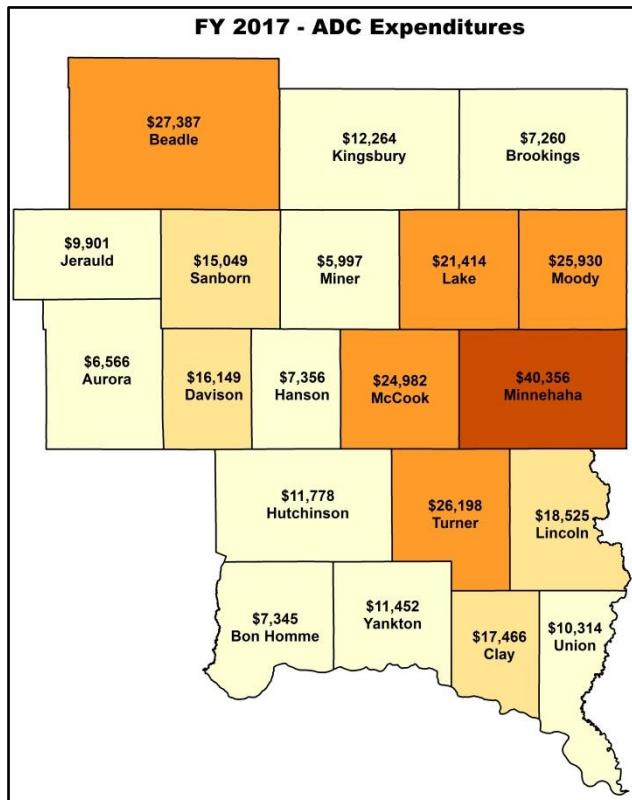
for predator control were \$172,234 in Region 3.

Wildlife damage staff responded to 149 requests for assistance with beaver damage and removed 346 beaver, which was a substantial increase over 2016. Most types of damage consisted of flooded crops, damage to trees in planted wind-breaks or near homes, and damage to roads. Staff assisted 119 different landowners with beaver damage concerns. They drove over 65,000 miles and worked 1,881 hours to address these problems within Region 3. Total program expenditures were \$65,664.

Wildlife damage staff also responded to 30 requests for assistance with nuisance species such as raccoons, badger, skunk, and mink. Most requests were handled with technical advice or loaner-traps. However, staff did provide direct control for commercial melon producers suffering damage from raccoons as well as a few other circumstances. GFP staff drove nearly 5,000 miles and worked 265 hours to address these



complaints. Overall, the ADC portion of the WDM program had a total expenditure of \$311,910 in



Region 3. Wildlife damage staff drove over 89,000 miles and worked more than 5,000 hours to address these 348 requests for assistance, which directly impacted 290 producers and landowners.

With deer populations at or below management objectives in most areas and an overall mild winter, as well as, impacts from Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) in 2016 and previous years, deer depredation was minimal. However, deer populations have been recovering in some areas and wildlife damage staff responded to 30 requests for assistance regarding deer damage. Most of these requests were handled with loaner panels to protect stored livestock feeds and the use of hazing techniques. These services impacted 23 different landowners in Region 3. Wildlife

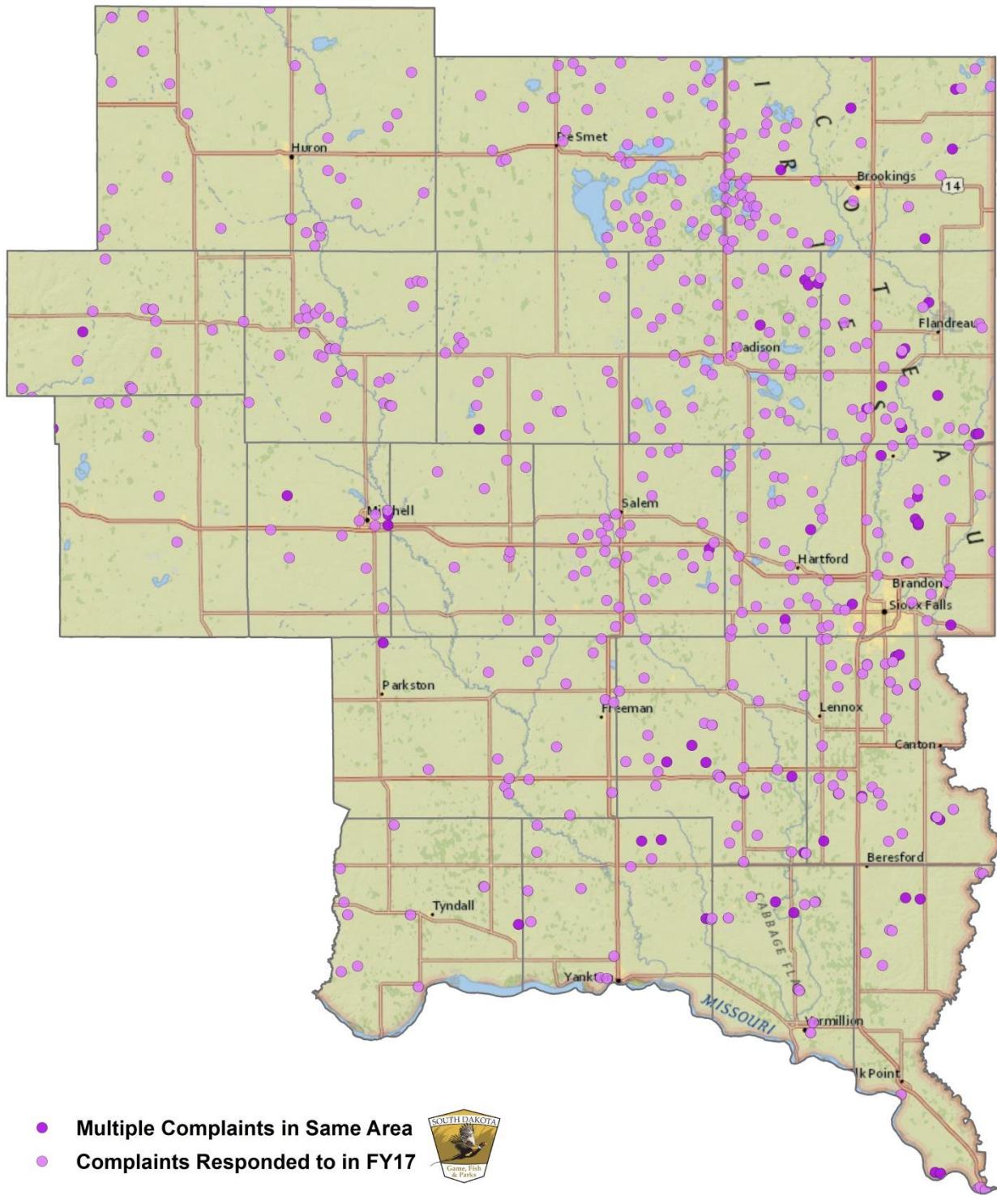
damage staff also initiated three stackyard contracts to permanently protect stored-feed supplies and three protective fencing contracts to protect commercial tree nurseries and orchards. Staff worked 1,091 hours to address these requests for assistance. Overall, the total program expenditures were \$91,573. This area of the program has seen substantial decreases since the winter of 2010-2011, due to overall lower deer numbers since that time.



Wildlife damage staff also responded to eight turkey issues within Region 3, as well as, several other requests for assistance involving other wildlife species. In addition, GFP assisted the city of Sioux Falls with several management strategies to address urban Canada goose concerns, an overabundant deer population, and several turkey issues in several areas of the city.

In summary, GFP responded to a total of 589 requests for assistance within the entire WDM program which directly impacted 516 landowners and producers in Region 3. The total program expenditures including staff time, mileage, equipment and materials totaled \$472,727.

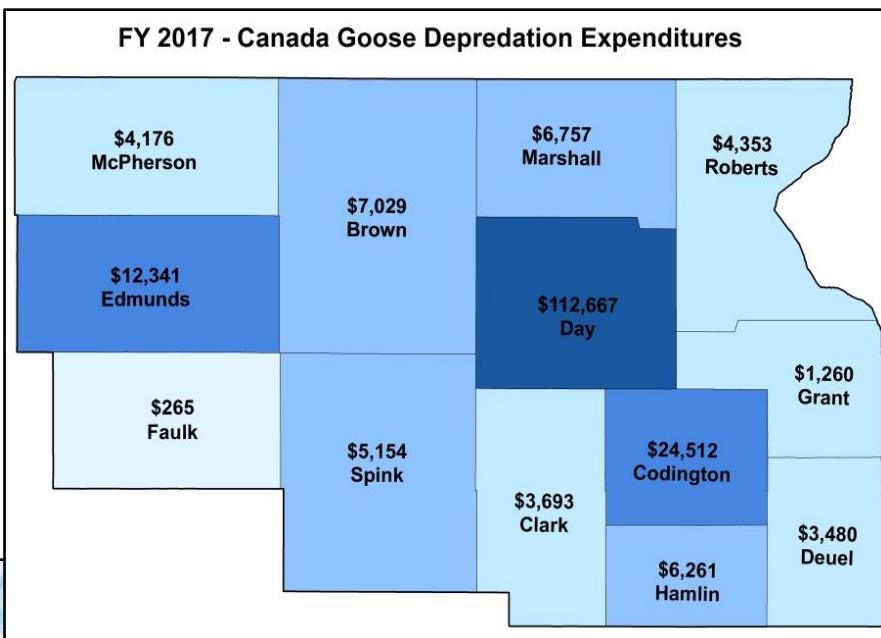
Region 3 Wildlife Damage Management Activities - FY 2017



Region 4 – Program Report

Region 4 is located in the northeastern portion of South Dakota and consists of 13 counties. The landscape varies greatly and includes croplands, rolling grasslands, many wetlands and lakes, and river drainages, but croplands dominate the majority of the counties within Region 4. Wildlife species are abundant and include white-tailed deer, waterfowl, upland game, furbearers, and turkeys. It has six field positions (wildlife damage specialists) and one supervisory position. Primary job duties for most field staff revolve around assistance with Canada goose and deer depredation, the protection of livestock from predators, and beaver control.

Although Region 4 experienced a normal spring for 2017, Canada goose production was average to below average. Coupled with lower resident Canada goose numbers and lower commodity prices, the demand for GFP assistance with Canada goose damage was lower than the previous years, but similar to 2016. GFP staff responded to 379 requests for assistance regarding Canada goose damage to growing-season crops (primarily soybeans). GFP staff worked with 294 landowners to provide crop protection from Canada goose damage. Staff worked

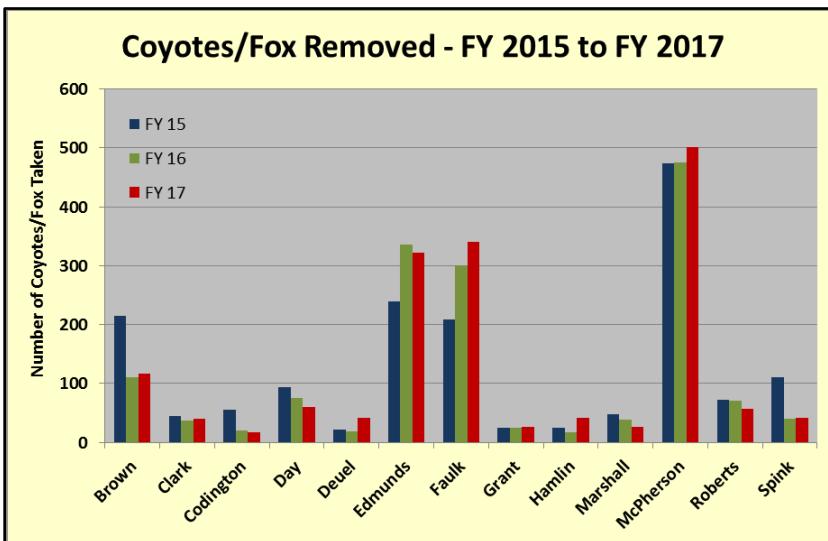


nearly 6,000 hours to respond to these concerns. GFP permitted 231 landowners to haze and remove Canada geese to alleviate damage to growing crops. GFP also initiated 32 food plot and buffer-strip contracts which are designed to alleviate goose damage around wetland edges by creating an alternate food source or barrier to the growing crops. Overall,

total program expenditures were \$195,087 which is a 10-year low.

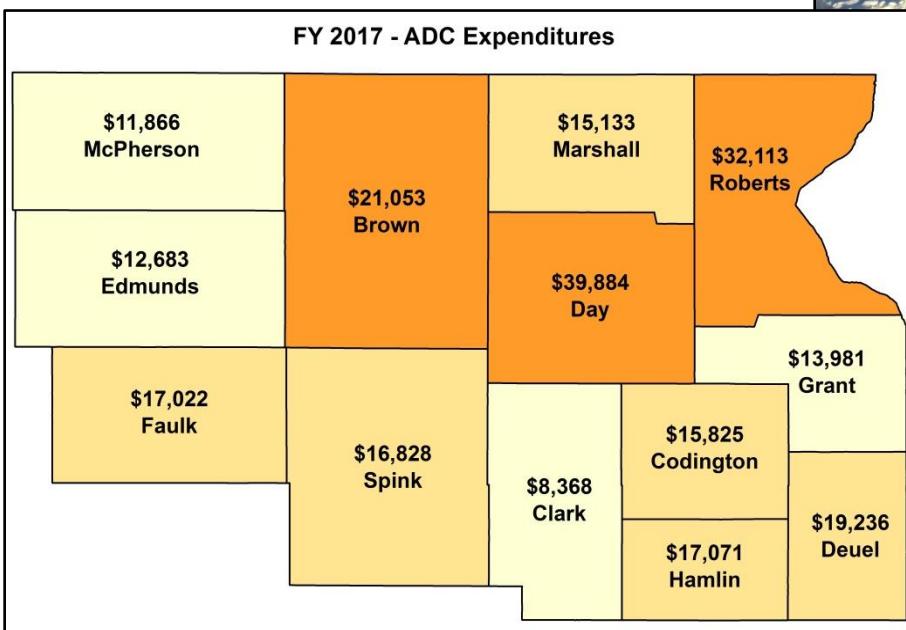
High coyote populations as well as large numbers of livestock had wildlife damage staff busy in regards to requests for assistance with coyotes. Staff worked with 242 livestock producers

to reduce or alleviate livestock losses caused from predators and addressed 390 requests for assistance, which was a slight increase from 2016. Region 4 has three very active predator control districts (Edmunds, Faulk, and McPherson counties) and their cooperative efforts are a great asset regarding predator control. GFP provided \$3,000 of cooperative funding to these districts for enhanced aerial predator control efforts, which were directed by local GFP wildlife damage staff. As a result, wildlife damage staff in cooperation with those predator control districts and USDA-Wildlife Services took 1,628 coyotes and fox. Wildlife



damage staff worked over 2,500 hours and drove nearly 61,000 miles to address these concerns. Total program expenditures for predator control were \$128,165 in Region 4.

Wildlife damage staff also responded to 122 requests for assistance with beaver damage where they removed 377 beaver. This workload was very similar to 2016 and kept staff busy. Most types of damage consisted of the flooding of crops, damage to trees in planted wind-



breaks or near homes, and damage to roads. Staff assisted 107 different landowners with beaver damage concerns. They drove 26,636 miles and worked 1,561 hours to handle these problems within Region 4. Total program expenditures were \$63,207.

Wildlife damage staff responded to 17 requests for assistance

with nuisance species such as raccoons, badger, skunk, and mink. Most requests were handled

with technical advice or loaner-traps. However, staff did provide direct control in a few circumstances. GFP staff drove 2,100 miles and worked 145 hours to address these complaints. Overall, the ADC portion of the WDM program had a total expenditure of \$252,841 in Region 4. Wildlife damage staff drove nearly 90,000 miles and worked more than 5,000 hours to address these 529 requests for assistance, which directly impacted 427 producers and landowners.

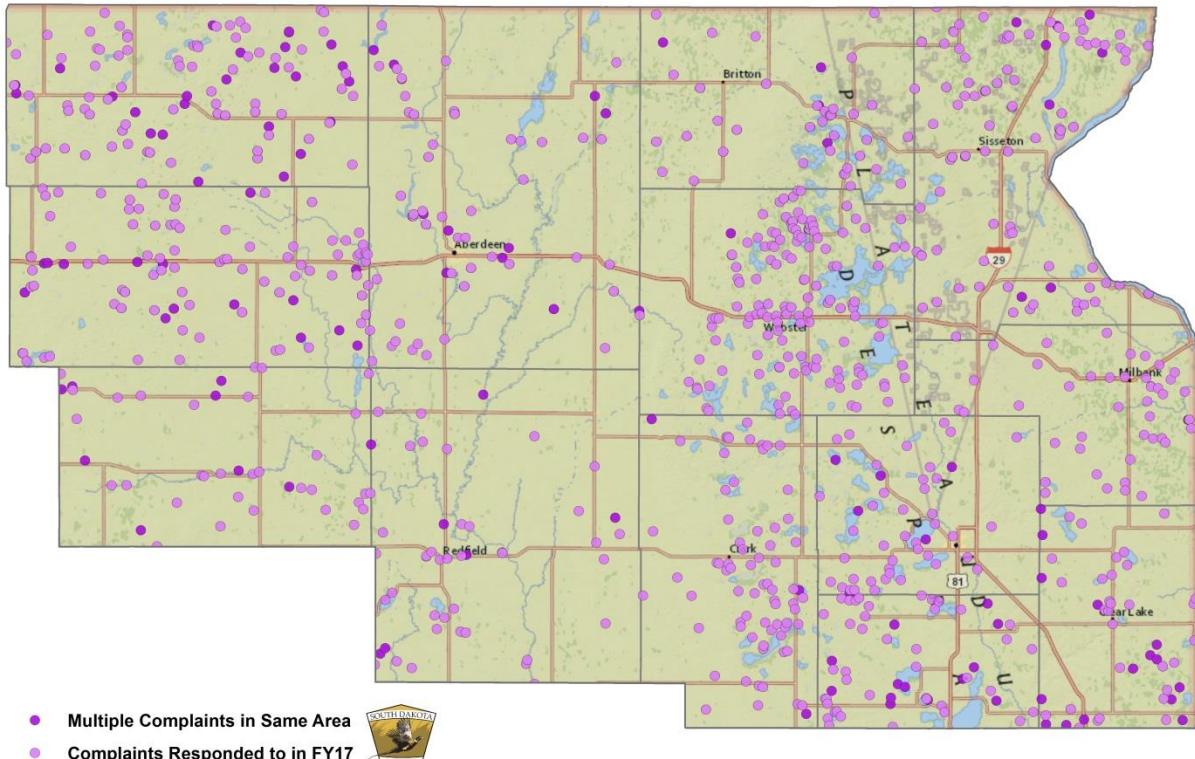
The winter weather of 2017 was cold and deep snow existed in parts of the region followed by thick ice persisting in the northwestern portions of the region. With deer populations at or below management objectives in most areas and a reprieve in weather, deer depredation concerns were less than expected. However, wildlife damage staff responded to 90 requests for assistance regarding deer damage to stored-feed supplies which primarily consisted of providing protective panels and hazing deer away from problem areas. These services impacted 87 different landowners in Region 4. Wildlife damage staff also initiated one stackyard contract to protect stored-feed supplies and four protective fencing projects to alleviate damage to commercial gardens and tree plantings. Staff worked 2,451 hours to address these concerns. Overall, the total program expenditures were \$144,190.

Wildlife damage staff also responded to ten turkey issues within Region 4 where large flocks of birds were causing damage to stored-feed supplies. These requests for assistance were handled primarily with protective netting and persistent hazing techniques. Several other requests for assistance involving other wildlife species were also addressed in Region 4. Overall, the game species (e.g. deer, Canada geese, and turkey) portion of the WDM program had a total expenditure of \$465,554 in Region 4. Wildlife damage staff worked more than 8,400 hours to address these 479 requests for assistance, which directly impacted 390 producers and landowners.

In summary, GFP responded to a total of 1,015 requests for assistance within the entire WDM program which directly impacted 824 landowners and producers in Region 4. The total program expenditures including staff time, mileage, equipment and materials totaled \$718,395.



Region 4 Wildlife Damage Management Activities - FY 2017



Updated: 11/06/2017

