

Incentive Program for Prairie Dog Habitat in the Conata Basin

The *South Dakota Black-Tailed Prairie Dog Conservation and Management Plan* was approved by the State Legislature in 2005. The plan includes opportunities for cooperative conservation activities, with an emphasis on voluntary incentives for certain private landowners with prairie dog acres. Lands eligible for these incentives must occur within the black-footed ferret reintroduction area in southwestern South Dakota (see map).

The black-footed ferret is protected as an endangered species by both state and federal laws. It relies overwhelmingly on the habitat and prey that prairie dogs provide.

With the assistance of a Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Grant from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks hopes to provide private landowners in this area with an alternate source of income to cooperatively promote agricultural production and wildlife conservation.

Interested private landowners in the black-footed ferret reintroduction area of Shannon, Pennington, and Jackson counties (see map) sign a contract enrolling a designated number of acres. Private landowners would then receive yearly payments, with a baseline of \$12.20 per acre, for the number of maintained, enhanced, or created prairie dog acres. In exchange, enrolled landowners cannot control (poison or shoot) prairie dogs in the area covered by the contract, thus helping to maintain and enhance black-footed ferret habitat.

If you would like more information regarding this incentive program or would like to participate, please contact Silka Kempema at Silka.Kempema@state.sd.us or 605-773-2742.

