South Dakota
Wildlife Division
Department of Game, Fish and Parks

South Dakota Dept. of Game, Fish & Parks
Foss Building Staff
523 E. Capitol
Pierre, SD 57501-3182

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Potential Partner:

From the multitude of wildlife species dependent upon its diverse landscapes to its world-famous pheasant hunting opportunities, South Dakota residents recognize these attributes as integral components of their quality of life and the reason thousands visit our great state each year. South Dakota's pheasant population is at a 44-year high and pheasant hunting annually provides approximately 163.4 million dollars to the state's economy (motel rooms, restaurants, gas stations, supplemental farm income, etc.). As most folks are keenly aware, over 1.5 million acres of undisturbed nesting cover provided by the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) has provided habitat to support the current pheasant population, benefited numerous other wildlife species and addressed other environmental concerns.

Approximately 300,000 acres of CRP expired in 2007, and most of these acres will likely return to crop production. In addition, significant acres of CRP will expire from 2008-2013, thus removing additional large blocks of undisturbed nesting cover that will likely result in the loss of high quality hunting habitat from SD GFP's Walk-In Area Program. The losses of pheasant habitat and hunting opportunities have potentially far-reaching negative impacts upon the quality of life and economy of the state of South Dakota.

The South Dakota Department of Game, Fish & Parks (SD GFP) has identified the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) as a powerful tool to improve wildlife habitat and public hunting access and seeks your support and involvement to implement this partnership-driven program. Administered by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA), CREP is simply a "state sponsored" Conservation Reserve Program designed to target and address specific high priority conservation and environmental objectives of the state. CREP is a great way to leverage federal dollars to establish publicly accessible wildlife habitat, while at the same time addressing other environmental resource concerns in the target area.

SD GFP has identified the James River Watershed Basin as an appropriate geographic area that could provide the biggest wildlife habitat, soil erosion, water quality and flood reduction returns on our investment. For more details, please see the enclosed CREP Proposal for the James River Watershed Basin.

A significant component of CREP is a substantial financial commitment by state CREP partners. This commitment shall not be less than 20% of the total project cost. SD GFP is committed to provide the required match, but additional non-federal financial contributions would be greatly appreciated. In addition, we need the support of numerous partners across South Dakota and within the watershed to help develop and promote the project and provide technical assistance to successfully implement it with participating landowners.

The challenge in front of us is huge, yet the rewards are immeasurable. We feel you may share this same vision and seek your involvement and/or support for this endeavor. Please feel free to contact Chad Switzer, CREP Team Leader, at 605-353-8477 if you have questions regarding the CREP proposal or how you may become involved with the project. You can also mail a letter of support to SD Game, Fish & Parks, ATTN: Chad Switzer, 895 3rd Street SW, Huron, SD 57350. To keep this proposed project moving forward, we would like to hear from you by May 1, 2008. Thank you for your time and we look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Tony Leif, Wildlife Division Director
South Dakota Department of Game, Fish & Parks

Enclosures: CREP Proposal & Executive Summary

Our Mission Statement: "Serving People, Managing Wildlife"