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Cost Shared Programs

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Cost Shared Programs For Wildlife Habitat



South Dakota

Cooperative Extension Service
South Dakota State University
U. S. Department of Agriculture

COST SHARED PROGRAMS

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Farm and ranch operators can add to their personal income by participating in existing wildlife habitat programs. They can benefit not only from direct payments, but also from cost-sharing practices, from hosting hunters, from harvest of furs and from conserving water. Apparently many farmers do not fully understand these benefits even though they might know the programs exist.

A recent survey* of 292 farmers in northeastern South Dakota indicated many are aware of programs for wetlands acquisition and development of wetlands and other wildlife areas but few are participating in the benefits. The study pertained to three programs: 1) Wetlands Acquisition, 2) Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP), and 3) Agricultural Conservation Program (ACP—"G" practices).

More farmers are aware of the wetlands acquisition program than any other wildlife program. In comparison to ACP and WHIP, 78% of the farmers have heard about the wetlands acquisition program, 63% and 58% respectively are aware of the latter two programs. The gap between awareness of a program and involvement is apparent, as only 19% of the farmers are involved in wetlands acquisition. Even fewer farmers interviewed in the northeastern counties participated in the other two programs (see Table 1).

During the years 1968-1970, participation in WHIP amounted to a little over 16,000 acres (6,810 in 1968; 180 in 1969; 6,900 in 1970) indicating that few farmers have taken advantage of the program.

Recent information from the U.S. Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife shows that nearly 1,200 landowners in South Dakota participate in the wetlands easement phase of the Wetlands Acquisition Program and that over 62,000 acres have been preserved during the period September 21, 1967 - September 20, 1970. In this same period 260 South Dakota landowners sold over 24,000 acres of land through the fee purchase phase.

Total participation in the Agricultural Conservation Program has not been as great, but figures for the years 1967 through 1969 reveal that many farmers and ranchers are benefiting by improving their land for wildlife (Table 2).

Importance of Wetlands for Waterfowl Production in South Dakota

The Central Flyway of waterfowl migrating north and south covers over one million square miles including all or parts of Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Colorado, Nebraska, Kansas, Ok-

lahoma, New Mexico, and Texas and the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba in Canada.

Part of the Central Flyway is known as the North American Prairie Pothole Region and covers over 300,000 square miles of south-central Canada, northern Montana, the Dakotas, and western Minnesota. Approximately 5 million ducks are produced in this region annually.

South Dakota's role in waterfowl production is important as 855,000 acres of good quality wetlands are present within this state. These wetlands supply approximately 10% of the ducks produced annually in North America (80% of those produced in the U.S.).

Conditions in the Pothole Region are not always ideal for waterfowl production. Some natural and man-influenced factors commonly occur, eg. burning, flooding, hailstorms, draining, drought, and disease.

If waterfowl are to be retained as an important resource in South Dakota, state and federal agencies and landowners must cooperatively preserve necessary habitat. Several state and federal programs have been developed to meet this goal.

Other Benefits From Wetlands

Wetlands not only are important for production of wild waterfowl, but they can provide other benefits to farm operators. In some areas they serve as catch basins to funnel water into underground reservoirs and thereby contribute to water well recharge. Water in wetlands close to farmsteads can be used for fire fighting should the need arise. Many wetlands provide water for livestock, if the wetlands are properly fenced and maintained. Deep wetlands might also support fish populations and in turn provide fishing as recreation. Some wetlands serve as flood preventives or protectors by holding run-off water.

Table 1. Awareness of and participation in cost-share wildlife habitat improvement programs in selected counties, northeast South Dakota.

Program	Aware of Program		Participation in Program	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Wetlands Acquisition	230 (78.8) ¹	62 (21.2)	57 (19.5)	235 (80.5)
Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program	170 (58.2)	122 (41.8)	21 (7.2)	271 (92.8)
Agricultural Conservation Program	184 (63.0)	108 (37.0)	29 (9.9)	263 (90.1)

*Sponsored by the departments of Rural Sociology and Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences.

¹First number represents respondents; number in parenthesis is percent of respondents.

The Federal Wetlands Acquisition Program

In 1961 Congress passed legislation to initiate a crash program to preserve the dwindling wetlands in the United States. Under this law the Department of the Interior was authorized to borrow up to \$105 million over a 7-year period starting in 1962 from the U.S. Treasury with the loan to be repaid from the sale of migratory bird hunting stamps (duck stamps). This period of loan was extended an additional 8 years, thus, the program will be available until 1976. Wetlands are to be acquired by outright purchase from private landowners or by perpetual easement.

Under the direct purchase program, the wetlands are marked with signs and managed as waterfowl production areas. With few exceptions they are open to public hunting. The counties in which purchased lands are located receive an annual payment equal to $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 percent of the current value of the wetlands or 25 percent of receipts from the uses of the lands whichever is greater.

The easement purchase program is a legal agreement with the landowner that he will not drain, burn, or fill the wetlands. Such an easement becomes part of the property deed. Ownership of the property remains with the individual who continues to pay annual taxes on the acreage. The property owner retains hunting, trapping, fishing, and mineral rights. He may use the wetlands in the manner he wishes as long as he doesn't drain, burn or fill them. A single easement payment, based on the local value of the land, is made to the landowner.

Water Bank Program

A program implemented in 1972 and now available to landowners is one to ". . . preserve, restore, and improve the wetlands of the Nation, and thereby to conserve surface waters, to preserve and improve habitat for migratory waterfowl and other wildlife resources, to reduce runoff, soil and wind erosion, and contribute to flood control, to contribute to improved water quality and reduce stream sedimentation, to contribute to improved subsurface moisture, to reduce acres of new land coming into production, to enhance the natural beauty of the landscape . . ."

This program is administered through the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service by a state committee which has designated **Clark, Codrington, Day, Edmunds, Faulk, Hamlin, Kingsbury, Lake, McCook, McPherson, Marshall, and Miner** Counties eligible for the program.

Land, to be eligible, must include at least 10 acres including 2 acres of a permanent wetland. Payment for the upland will be \$10-20 per acre per year depending upon the county and \$5 per acre per year for the wetland portion. Agreements are made for a 10-year term. Eligibility of the land will be determined by

technicians of the Soil Conservation Service. The land cannot be grazed or harvested nor can it be drained or used as a storage area for draining other wetlands or used as a source of irrigation water.

Sign-up for participation in the program must be made in late May and early June at the county ASC office.

Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program

The purpose of the current Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP), financed by the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks, is to increase the production of fish and wildlife species on privately owned land through habitat improvement. Benefit payments for approved practices can amount to 80% of the total cost. In many instances WHIP payments are used to supplement cost-shares received through the ACP-"G" practices.

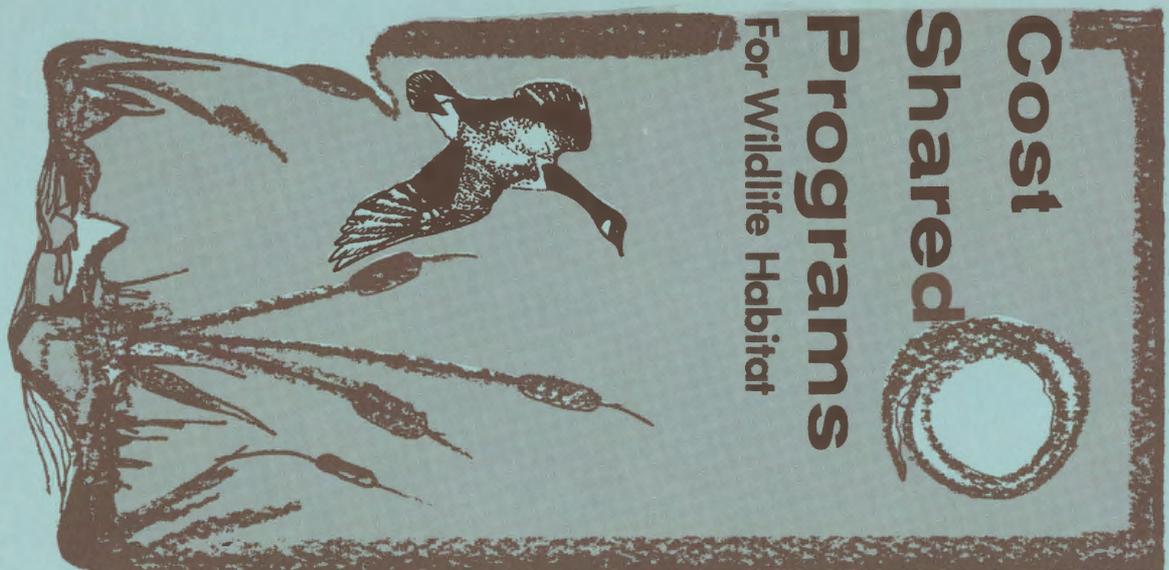
Each farm or ranch is treated according to the wildlife species one wishes to benefit. Some may want to create more habitat for pheasants while others favor prairie grouse, deer or waterfowl. Practices differ in the various parts of the state, thus there is no rigid pattern for all lands.

Trained personnel of the U.S. Soil Conservation Service and the Department of Game, Fish and Parks assist the landowner in planning and establishing the wildlife habitat practices. The entire farm or ranch is considered in the plan for wildlife development. Each participating land-owner accepts a formal plan of practices which must be applied within two years. Maintenance of practices are the responsibility of the owner. Only practices which benefit the over-all conservation of soil, water and plants will be supported through WHIP.

Practice categories include: woody cover plantings, thinning forest stands, nesting cover, water developments, food plots, and fencing of existing habitat to provide for improved management. Several types of developments are provided within these categories.

Table 2. Participation in ACP Practices in South Dakota, 1967-1969

1969	Counties	Farms	Units	Cost-Share
G-1	51	225	880 Acres	\$23,461
G-2	10	14	17 Structures	3,379
G-3	31	104	106 Structures	34,881
G-4	6	6	170 Acres Served	464
1968				
G-1	48	176	856 Acres	20,269
G-2	14	32	35 Structures	6,158
G-3	57	77	85 Structures	25,589
G-4	10	13	663 Acres Served	1,118
1967				
G-1	50	193	1,041 Acres	23,418
G-2	21	176	-----	27,788
G-3	49	241	254 Structures	88,932
G-4	21	35	-----	2,644



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