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### Fish and Wildlife -- Part of Your Wealth

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South Dakota State University  
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**cooperating with  
Soil Conservation Service**



# Fish and Wildlife--part of your wealth

By Donald R. Progulsk, associate professor and head, Department of Wildlife Management, South Dakota State University, and John B. Farley, biologist, Soil Conservation Service, Huron.

## WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Part of a farmer's wealth is the wildlife on his land. Why? Because wildlife can. . .

- provide a direct source of income
- increase the net worth of his farm
- decrease damage from nuisance animals
- improve farm to market roads

Wildlife require certain protection and food areas that can generally be developed within the scope of good farm management and at little cost. Land management for wildlife is the type that increases the real estate value of a farm or ranch.

The value of wildlife varies with individuals. Many people enjoy having birds and animals on their land. All farmers benefit to some degree from the "natural regulation" which many birds and mammals have on insects, rodents, and other animal pests. Supplemental income can also be derived from the sale of jackrabbits, muskrats, and other fur-bearers taken from farms and ranches.

People who hunt or fish also profit—some from the fish and game they add to the dinner table—but more from the relaxation these sports offer. A recent nationwide survey indicated that a greater percentage of farmers hunt than do people living in larger cities (18% vs 7%) thus, as a group, farmers receive more benefits from wildlife than do "city folks."

Rural people gain indirect benefits from wildlife and land improvements for wildlife on their farms or ranches. A wildlife cover planting, such as a shelterbelt, is a definite asset to a farm. A good windbreak can save a farmer up to an estimated 35% on his heat-

Shelterbelts provide a cooling effect in summer and a heat bill reduced in winter. They benefit wildlife as nesting, feeding, and escape areas.

ing bill, lessen the costs of over-winter feeding of livestock, increase the farm's real estate value by more than \$1,000 and improve the attractiveness of the rural landscape.

A sizeable sum is rebated annually to county highway funds from the sale of hunting, fishing, and trapping licenses in the state. This rebate in some counties amounts to more than \$10,000 annually. It is reasonable that with an increase of wildlife within a county, that more of these licenses will be sold, resulting in additional money turned over to the county. Hunters also help the community economy through money spent for food, lodging, gasoline, ammunition, clothing, and other merchandise and services connected with the sport.

Many practices, such as the construction of a wildlife pond, planting a shelterbelt or other wildlife habitat, not only provide the benefits of more game and other wildlife, but also improves the appearance of the countryside. . . in short, they make your farm a better place to live.

As the need for outdoor recreation mounts with rising population and more leisure time, good management of wildlife becomes increasingly important. Wildlife is a crop of the land. For wise use, the surplus must be harvested each year with a breeding stock maintained. The principle is the same as that followed by a farmer in growing such crops as forage and hay, and in livestock and poultry production.

Production of a harvestable wildlife crop rests in the hands of the men who live on the land. . . those people who produce farm and ranch crops. Conservation farming and ranching can result in a greater annual harvest of game birds and mammals.

Wildlife can be increased on a farm without taking cropland out of production. Development of odd areas and fence rows for nesting and loafing habitat are examples.

The main wildlife management objectives are to preserve and control wildlife populations to achieve maximum populations suitable to a farm or ranch op-





### **G-1 Wildlife Food and Cover Planting**

- applicable only on farmland to be put into trees, shrubs, or other plant cover to provide food or cover for wildlife.
- food includes corn, sorghums, tame sunflowers, buckwheat and millets.
- nesting cover plantings include legumes, medium and tall native grasses and any tame grass.
- winter and other woody cover needs are provided by tree and shrub plantings.
- both food and cover plantings must be protected from grazing.

### **G-2 Wetland Development—create and improve marsh habitat**

- site must be suitably located with adequate supply of water.
- shallow wetlands can be created by construction of dams, dikes, mechanical removal of soil, and by plugging drainage ditches.
- level ditches can be constructed in suitable existing marshes.
- wetlands can be improved by blasting.
- cost-share for fencing is available to provide for proper management of the area.

## **FOUR ACP**

eration, create maximum recreation over a long period, and minimize the damage done by skunks, raccoons, badgers, blackbirds, and other birds and animals.

Any one landowner normally could not fulfill all these objectives. Such goals are best reached through cooperation of groups of landowners, wildlife agencies and other organizations. Wildlife programs on private lands in South Dakota are assisted by professional biologists employed by the Department of Game, Fish and Parks, U. S. Soil Conservation Service and the U. S. Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife. These men are readily available to offer advice on wildlife problems.

#### **HOW TO ENCOURAGE WILDLIFE**

Wildlife during all seasons need suitable cover, water and ample food supplies. Since food supply is

generally maintained under usual farm and ranch operations, cover and water become the important factors. Winter protection cover, nesting cover and travel lanes are most apt to be lacking in a wildlife production unit. Certain inexpensive improvements can be made on land to help fulfill these needs and increase the annual wildlife crop.

Protection of wildlife cover from excessive grazing is of utmost importance because only fire is more destructive. To accomplish proper grazing management, additional fencing is often necessary, especially where nesting areas are involved. On rangelands, nat-

Wildlife cover plantings provide winter protection for game birds and mammals. In western South Dakota, cover development is more essential than in the eastern part where cultivated fields and adjacent areas provide cover.





### **G-3 Wildlife Ponds and Dams—create permanent ponds for fish**

- farm fish ponds may be constructed.
- area must be protected from domestic livestock except that watering lanes can be approved.
- protective fencing can be cost-shared.
- excess water may be piped off for use by domestic livestock when approved.



### **G-4 Fencing to Protect Existing Wildlife Habitat**

- eligible areas include but are not necessarily limited to ponds, marshes, odd areas, gullies, stock dams and dugouts.
- livestock will be excluded from the protected area for a prescribed period each year.

## **PRACTICES**

urally occurring woody areas offer protection to deer, antelope, and prairie grouse. Such areas convert to grass when they are overgrazed, thus they should be protected by fences if wildlife is to be encouraged. Severely eroded gullies may heal and provide wildlife cover when they are fenced.

### **MOWING PRACTICES**

Waterways, roadside ditches, fence rows, and field borders produce more pheasants per acre than do haylands or alfalfa fields. A study in Brookings County revealed that as many pheasants per acre are produced on roadside ditches and field borders than on haylands.

Pheasant hens are persistent in their nesting efforts. Their production period extends well into July. If mowing for hay crops and weed control can be delayed until mid-July, many more pheasant chicks will have time to leave their nests before mowing machines are run through the areas.

In areas where haying of natural grasslands is an alternate year practice, or anywhere that increased pheasant nesting is an objective, strip mowing in 30- to 40-foot widths will increase nesting activity.

### **COVER PLANTINGS**

Nearly every farm and ranch has certain odd areas where wildlife can thrive. Low moist areas, gullies, and field corners can be developed for cover.

Winter cover in range country can be developed in protected areas so that prairie grouse and deer have a place to find cover from severe weather.

On pheasant winter range, protective cover in the vicinity of food sources is of prime importance.

Strong winds coupled with heavy snow cause a

large mortality rate among pheasants, while at other times deep ice-crusts prevent them from securing food. Leaving rows of unharvested corn or sorghum near protective cover will help pheasants through critical days of the winter.

Cover planting or improvement of existing areas should be included in farm and ranch conservation planning. The cover plots can be in the form of a wide fence row, windbreak, woodlot, a wet area, or some odd corner of a cultivated field. Grassed waterways also afford some protection to wildlife during part of the year.

### **WATER AND WETLANDS**

Water is one of the essentials for wildlife, as well as for domestic animals. Many practices which increase water areas benefit wildlife. Marshes and farm ponds favor the production of ducks and furbearers. The sale of pelts of muskrats, raccoons, and mink, provide supplemental farm income. Farm ponds of sufficient depth and surface area provide good fishing for farm families.

Existing natural wetland areas—areas which stay wet in years of normal rainfall—should be preserved and improved. Farm ponds (dugouts and dams) also add to the value of a piece of land.

### **ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE TO YOU**

Your local Soil Conservation Service representative can advise you on including wildlife benefits in your conservation farm or ranch plan.

The Soil Conservation Service also provides assistance in the application and certification of the ACP

practices involving fishponds, shallow water developments and winter cover plantings.

**FINANCIAL AID**

The Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service through its ACP program currently provides landowners the opportunity to improve their lands for wildlife through cost-sharing practices. Practices provide for both establishing and protecting perennial herbaceous and woody cover. They also provide for annual food plots, shallow water developments for waterfowl, and deep water ponds for fish. Brief descriptions of these practices are given below. A complete description of each practice is included in an ACP Handbook. These handbooks are in every local office of ASCS, SCS and the Cooperative Extension Service. Cost-sharing must be requested before the practice is started.

Financial assistance is also available under other long term land programs administered by the ASCS, and under the Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP) administered by the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks.

**PUBLIC RELATIONS**

Landowners who allow hunters and fishermen on their property often create lasting friendships. A little understanding by the farmers, as well as the hunter or fisherman, will do much to establish relationships by which both parties are mutually benefited. Courtesy, gun safety, and recognition of private property are of particular importance for improving sportsman-farmer relations.

**SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

- Your County Extension Agent.
- Cooperative Extension Service, SDSU.
- Soil Conservation Service personnel.
- Department of Game, Fish and Parks personnel.
- Your Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service Office.
- Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, Land Acquisition Offices.

PHOTOS: Courtesy of South Dakota Department of Game, Fish, and Parks, and U. S. Soil Conservation Service. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U. S. Department of Agriculture. John T. Stone, Dean of Extension, South Dakota State University, Brookings.  
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