



*South Dakota*  
**GRASSLANDS  
INITIATIVE**

# PARTNER UPDATES

***Stories, information & opportunities from your partners in  
South Dakota Grassland Conservation***

Any SDGI Partner is encouraged to submit an article to our quarterly partner update. If you'd like to share about your organization, projects you've been doing, or events coming up, please email your article & pictures to [Laura.Grass@sdconservation.net](mailto:Laura.Grass@sdconservation.net) by May 17th for the summer 2024 newsletter.



**SDSU & SD  
GRASSLAND  
COALITION**

SDSU Extension is partnering with the South Dakota Grassland Coalition to investigate the nutritional value and mineral content of various native forb species across the state of South Dakota. This project will expand on efforts by the Xerces Society and contribute to education materials for various partnership efforts. These include SD Grassland Coalition Grazing Schools, NRCS Range Tools, SDSU Extension programs, and educational efforts for The Nature Conservancy, SD Game, Fish and Parks, Audubon Great Plains, and more.

"It is important to expand our understanding of the value that native forbs bring to our landscapes and ecosystems," says Kaylee Wheeler, SDSU Extension Range Field Specialist and project manager. Direct benefits of this project include an improved understanding of grazing livestock nutrition. Additional implications include outreach to land managers and producers regarding the retention of native forbs with a reduction of broadleaf spraying in South Dakota pastures. As a result, there is potential for improvements in landscape aesthetics, wildlife and pollinator habitats, diversity, and soil health across the state.

For additional information on this project, contact Kaylee Wheeler, SDSU Extension Range Field Specialist, [kaylee.wheeler@sdstate.edu](mailto:kaylee.wheeler@sdstate.edu) or 605-773-8120.



Pictured in the photo L to R: Linda Hiltner, USDA Grasslands Visitor Center; Emily Rohrer, USDA NRCS; Jason Burma, Sunshine Bible Academy

## SD DISCOVERY CENTER

A listening session was held in Wall on January 16 as part of the Planning for Grasslands Education project. Over 20 stakeholders including educators, agency outreach and technical staff, and faculty convened to discuss and strategize what grasslands education for youth should "look like". The input is being compiled and will be used to create a framework which will inform and guide curriculum development and youth education efforts.

## THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

The open winter with relatively mild temperatures were really good conditions for getting brush and tree work done in Eastern SD. When weather conditions are favorable a person can really make some headway with a brushcutter and small chainsaw.

While safely cutting brush is important, it is just as important to then treat the stems with chemical to ensure that there are no resprouts from the stems. We typically use the chemical triclopyr (Garlon 4) for basal bark or stem treatments. Deciduous trees/brush will all need to be treated with a chemical to ensure it doesn't come back. Conifers like Eastern Red Cedar do not require the chemical treatments. As long as you fully cut the stem/trunk lower than the lowest branch it will not stump sprout. If you work with deciduous (elms, buckthorn, sumac, Russian olive, or others) species and you do not treat those stems, all your work is negated because they come back and you will have to retreat those stems. Work smarter and not harder and you will end up with a much more desirable outcome.

Now is also the time to be wrapping up final fire line preparations for spring prescribed fires. Work done now will make fire implementation much easier on the day of. Check out the webpage for spring Fire Schools and opportunities to learn more about prescribed fire.

It is also hiring time and The Nature Conservancy has seasonal and full-time opportunities available: [Careers | The Nature Conservancy](#)

# DAKOTA GRASSLANDS- WHERE THE GOOD THINGS GROW



## Public and Producer surveys guide the Dakota Grasslands - Where Good Things Grow Campaign

The South Dakota Grassland Coalition recently received funding through a USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service cooperative grant. The overall goals of the grant are to improve the condition of our State's grasslands and to ensure all South

Dakotans appreciate the diverse values those grasslands provide each of us. Two polls were completed in 2023 that provided valuable insight and are guiding future actions in the campaign.

### South Dakota Registered Voter Poll

The poll was conducted with 505 randomly selected voters in South Dakota. The results showed strong support for healthy grasslands and a good overall appreciation for the benefits they provide. The results also show that while the respondents have some general knowledge of grassland basics, more education is needed, along with the identification of clear actions interested citizens can take to help ensure the health and preservation of Dakota grasslands.

### South Dakota Producer Survey

A survey was completed of grassland producers/managers later in 2023. 472 producers participated in the survey. The results showed most respondents associated good grassland management with positive outcomes for both their ranches and the environment. The producers also shared the greatest needs they felt would assist in their desire to improve the grasslands in their operations.

Additional information on both of these surveys is available on the Dakota Grasslands - Where Good Things Grow website at [wheregoodthingsgrow.org](https://wheregoodthingsgrow.org).

SD Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is accepting applications! NRCS accepts applications for financial assistance year-round! In signing up well advanced of an application deadline, applicants will have more time to work one-on-one with conservation planners to develop a conservation plan that addresses the goals and objectives of each specific operation. Applicants who have been farming and ranching for less than 10 years qualify for designated fund pools and other provisions. Learn more by reviewing "[Get Started! A Guide to USDA resources...](#)" online or request a hardcopy by calling 605-352-1240. Then stop in your local NRCS office to learn more about financial incentives specifically available in your area!



## NRCS





## SOUTH CENTRAL RC&D



South Central Resource Conservation and Development (South Central RC&D) has partnered with several agencies to host three Woody Encroachment educational opportunities.



Sean Kelly, gave a presentation on “Woody Plant Encroachment and Prescribed Fire” at the 45th annual Ranchers Workshop held January 10th at the Sinte Gleska Multi-Purpose Building in Mission, SD. Kelly showed producers how the “Green Glacier” is moving into South Dakota, the resource concerns on grasslands, and the work the Mid-Missouri River Prescribed Burn Association (MMRPBA) has done. Kelly is an SDSU Extension Range Management Field Specialist and Liaison Officer for the (MMRPBA). Other speakers at the workshop included, Dani Stearns – “Turning a Profit-Using Software”, Heather Swanson- “Don’t be a John Wayne on the Prairie” and Heather Venenga- “Cultivating Your Farm Succession Plan”. Partnering agencies included SDSU Extension, Rosebud Sioux Tribal Ranch, Mellette and Todd County Conservation Districts, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Mellette-Todd County Farm Service Agency.

Two informational meetings were held on Eastern Red Cedar Encroachment. Twenty-eight people were in attendance for the Winner meeting and twenty -nine people attended the Mission meeting. Sean Kelly, spoke at both meetings on the “Different Methods to Control Eastern Red Cedar (ERC)” and touched on the work the MMRPBA has done. Shane Reise, NRCS Resource Unit Conservationist, explained NRCS programs available to producers to aid with ERC control at the Winner meeting and Mike Schmidt, NRCS DC from Mellette/Todd County office, spoke at the Mission meeting. Kendall Hettick and Trent Walrod from Pheasant Forever explained how Pheasant Forever Biologists’ partner with NRCS to assist with woody encroachment issues. Jessica Thiry and John Mayrose, Private Lands Habitat Biologists’ from South Dakota Game Fish and Parks, talked about the programs they have available to producers to assist with woody encroachment.

The evening of March 19th, Murdo will be one of the hosting sites for a Prescribed Burn Classroom Session. For more information, contact Jewell Bork, Program Manager phone 605-669-2222

## KATERI CARBON



Matt Ricketts talks about the relationship between regenerative grazing, carbon sales, and natural capital at a Kateri Carbon event in September 2023.





## PRAIRIE POTHOLE JOINT VENTURES



ConocoPhillips generously contributed funding to Prairie Pothole and many other Joint Ventures again this past year. Their contribution to the Prairie Pothole Region resulted in eleven agreements between the USFWS South Dakota Partners for Fish and Wildlife program and private landowners. These agreements led to grassland restoration on 893 acres and grazing management on 1,136 acres. In total, 91% of the acres were on USFWS perpetual easement tracts and the ConocoPhillips dollars were matched 1:1 by landowner cash and contributions.

In collaboration with many sponsors, the Northern Great Plains Joint Venture (NGPJV) hosted the first South Dakota Private Lands Biologist Forum at the end of November 2023.



## NORTHERN GREAT PLAINS JOINT VENTURE

Over three days, 110 private lands practitioners from 28 organizations met in person to network and build relationships. Attendees participated in presentations, panel discussions, and breakout sessions and heard from South Dakota landowners, organization leadership, local consultants, and each other. Core values of trust, flexibility, and partnership and collaboration were continually emphasized by speakers and attendees alike.

In a post-event survey, 96% of respondents indicated that they connected with new partners in their region, while 100% of respondents said that they connected with new partners in the state. All respondents found the South Dakota Private Lands Biologist Forum to be valuable and would participate in a similar statewide event at least every other year. Kudos to all attendees, planning committee members, and sponsors for making this first event a success! More information on the 2023 South Dakota Private Lands Biologist Forum can be found [here](#). The NGPJV plans to build on this energy with the newly galvanized network of private lands professionals! If you would like to be involved with future events or planning, please reach out to Krista Erdman at [kerdman@ducks.org](mailto:kerdman@ducks.org).

More updates from the NGPJV, including the 2023 Annual Report, can be found [here](#).

## SD GF&P



South Dakota's farmers, ranchers, and landowners are renowned for having a profound connection with the land and with the majority of land in South Dakota privately owned, landowners play an instrumental role in the conservation and sustainability of our state's natural resources and wildlife.

Working with producers and landowners to assist them in meeting their ranch, farm, or habitat goals is one of South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks' (GFP) top priorities. GFP employs twelve private lands habitat biologists throughout South Dakota that are specialized in designing projects and harnessing its own financial assistance program options to accomplish the goals and visions of the landowner. GFP deploys a suite of conservation practices through its Private Lands Habitat Program. Many of these practices place special emphasis in providing financial assistance to improve grassland and grazing management to livestock producers such as cross fencing, water development, and grassland and wetland restoration.

Grazing management and wildlife share an important connection. Proper grazing management guards against extreme weather events like drought, increases plant/forage productivity and diversity and allows plants adequate time to recover. Wildlife also benefits by the increase in plant diversity and vegetative structure that is created by grazing different paddocks or pastures at different times. This enables wildlife to select for their preferred vegetation or habitat structure. GFP also provides cost share assistance to establish or repair shelterbelts that serve mutual benefits of livestock protection and wildlife habitat. GFP biologists are also adept at identifying where other program options may be better suited and work alongside our conservation partners to meet the desired outcomes of the project.

To learn more about GFP's private lands program or find a biologist that can meet you, visit [habitat.sd.gov](https://habitat.sd.gov)





# NEWS FROM SOUTH DAKOTA GRASSLANDS INITIATIVE

## QUARTERLY PARTNER MEETINGS

➤➤➤ In January, four partner meetings were held around the state. Each of these had abundant networking, conversations, and brainstorming on the grasslands. In total, about 100 participated either in person or virtually. The ideas and themes developed from these regional meetings will be shared during the second day of our Grassland Summit. This summer, we will see the development of action teams to work on the goals.

Our April partner meeting will take place on Monday, April 22nd at 1pm central/ noon mountain with the zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84774382074>

If you'd like to be on the agenda to share a brief (1-10 minute) update, program overview, or other information related to grassland conservation, please email

[Laura.grass@sdconservation.net](mailto:Laura.grass@sdconservation.net)



## SDGI WEBSITE & CALENDAR

➤➤➤ Take some time to explore the SDGI website, at [www.SDGrassInitiative.org](http://www.SDGrassInitiative.org). On the website you can learn more about what SDGI is, sign up to be a formal partner, and view the calendar of upcoming events. The SDGI Calendar is intended to be a cumulative spot to display all upcoming events. Use this to help promote your events, and as a reference when scheduling events. To submit your event, please provide your event name, details and the key contact to [Laura.grass@sdconservation.net](mailto:Laura.grass@sdconservation.net).



# NEWS FROM SOUTH DAKOTA GRASSLANDS INITIATIVE

We invite you to subscribe to our podcast, Partners on the Prairie, available on Apple, Amazon, and Spotify Podcasts, as well as on our website under the resources tab.

Each podcast is 15-25 minutes in length, designed to be a bite sized introduction to the various partners helping with South Dakota's grasslands.

Currently, there are ten partner podcasts highlighted. These include SD Soil Health Coalition, SD Game Fish & Parks, National Wild Turkey Federation, Northern Great Plains Joint Venture, The Nature Conservancy, Audubon Great Plains, Ducks Unlimited, Northern Prairies Land Trust, NRCS and Presentation Sisters.

We also invite you to share about your work through a podcast. If you'd be interested, please fill out [this form](https://forms.gle/h9ysosmWrvzUtcyh6) (<https://forms.gle/h9ysosmWrvzUtcyh6>) to set it up. Prior to the interview, we will plan for the direction of conversation and schedule a time for a recorded zoom call to record the podcast. Podcasts are edited and available for you to review prior to publication.

## PARTNERS ON THE PRAIRIE PODCAST



## SD WOODY ENCROACHMENT HAPPENINGS CALL

In December 2023, a call was hosted by SDGI to bring together all those in the state working to address the issue of woody encroachment. There was interest in holding these calls quarterly, and so the next one is scheduled for April 2nd at 9:30 central/ 8:30 mountain.

To be added to the 'SD Woody Encroachment Happenings' Google group, email [Laura.grass@sdconservation.net](mailto:Laura.grass@sdconservation.net)

# NEWS FROM SOUTH DAKOTA GRASSLANDS INITIATIVE

## SOUTH DAKOTA GRASSLANDS SUMMIT



The deadline to register for the South Dakota Grasslands Summit is March 11th. The Summit will take place March 18th-19th in Oacoma, SD. We also ask for the Initiative's Partners to help spread the word about the upcoming Grasslands Summit.

This unique event will bring together partners across South Dakota, and provide two days of focused learning and discussion on the future of the grasslands in our state.

### MONDAY, MARCH 18TH

9:00 **Registration**

9:30-10:30 **Opening Session: The Status of South Dakota's Grasslands**

10:45-12:45 **Session 1: Grassland Economics & Profitability**

**Lunch**

1:45-3:30 **Session 2: Economics of a Changing Landscape**

4:00-5:15 **Session 3: Solutions for Grassland Conservation**

5:15-5:45 **Where do we go from here?**

7:00-9:00 **Graze, and Grow Connections: Social, Poster & Vendor Show**

Monday's speakers will address the status of South Dakota's grasslands in relation to ecology, economics, market forces and social value.

Tuesday will build off ideas shared on day one, with large group conversations looking at finding collaborative solutions to some of the challenges South Dakota grasslands face. Attendees also have the opportunity to also register for the Grassland Conservation & Policy Leader's Forum and lunch, an event focused on Grassland Policy.

A complete schedule, event details, and registration is available on our website under the 'Events' tab

(<https://sdgrassinitiative.org/summit/>)

### TUESDAY, MARCH 19TH

7:30-8:15 **Optional Coffee with Summit Speakers**

8:30-10:00 **Welcome & Group Discussions  
SD Grasslands Initiative Goals & Plans  
Audience Q & A with Summit Speakers**

10:15-noon **Supporting Our Grasslands As Partners**

Noon- 3 pm **Grassland Conservation & Policy Leader's Forum**

Do you have a poster to share about your grassland operation, something your conservation district is doing for grasslands, or perhaps a research project?

You are encouraged to share your poster at the SD Grasslands Summit. These will be on display during the event, but you are not expected to accompany your poster. Please help us plan by submitting your poster information [here](#).



# 2024 Prescribed Burn Learning Opportunities

## FIELD DAYS \*Pre-registration is required.

Participants **MUST** complete one of the evening classroom sessions OR the classroom training offered on the morning of the field day to participate in the live fire training sessions. Those registering for field days will receive additional details in order to prepare for field day events.

## REGISTRATION

\*ALL CLASSES & FIELD DAYS ARE **FREE**

Contact Jan Rounds at SDSU  
Extension Watertown Center  
605.882.5140  
[Janice.rounds@sdstate.edu](mailto:Janice.rounds@sdstate.edu)

## DATES

### Classroom Sessions

Feb 8, 5:30 - 8:30pm - Huron, Huron Events Center  
Feb 22, 5:30 - 8:30pm - Milbank, Milbank Fire Hall  
Feb 27, 6:00pm - Redfield, Redfield Fire Department  
March 19, 5:30 - 8:30pm - Murdo, The Jones County Sportsman's Club

### Field Sessions

April 9-10 - Lower Brule Fire School  
April 23-24 - Oak Lake Fire School - CRP/woody focus  
May 7-8 - Oak Lake Fire School - ecological outcomes focus

The Prescribed Fire Classes and Field Training is for landowners, non-operating landowners, & agency staff; all are welcome. During the training, you will learn how to plan and implement burning on your own land. This training includes the basics of planning, preparation, and conducting safe and effective prescribed fire.

### Field Sessions Include

- Fire break preparation
- Weather and fuel types
- Burn technique and safety
- PPE / Equipment training
- Live Fire Skills / Burning

### Classroom Sessions Include

- Fire planning and design
- Goals / Objectives / Safety
- Ecology and weather
- Communications
- Burning CRP / Other Programs





SD SOCIETY FOR RANGE MANAGEMENT

# SD RANGE MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP

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**JUNE 25-27, 2024**

**2024 THEME: FOUNDATIONS OF  
RANGE MANAGEMENT**

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## EVENT DETAILS

**Registration: \$150**

**Location: Belle Fourche, SD**

**Audience: Agency staff - USFS, BLM, BIA, NRCS, NGOs, etc.**

**Topics: range soils, ecological sites, state and transition models, plant ID, prescribed burn as a management tool**

**Agenda: detailed agenda emailed out the week prior**

**\*\*Registration will go live on March 15 at  
[sdrangelands.com](https://sdrangelands.com)\*\***

**\*\*Registration limited to 35-40 people.\*\***

**For more information:**

**Krista Ehlert, SDSU, 605-394-2236, [krista.ehlert@sdstate.edu](mailto:krista.ehlert@sdstate.edu)**

**OR**

**Matt Scott, USFS, 307-399-3425, [matthew.c.scott@usda.gov](mailto:matthew.c.scott@usda.gov)**



## What you need to know

- ▶ Registration starts 8:30 AM June 12th at the Codington Extension Building. Student display set-up will take place at the same time.
- ▶ **Meals Provided:**
  - June 12th: Lunch, Supper
  - June 13th: Lunch
- ▶ June 12th is the practice day in the field. Students will be in the field from morning until supper time. Except the New Rangers, they will come in at 3 PM to do plant presses.
- ▶ Student talks will start at 7:00 PM June 12th, location TBD. Everyone is welcome to come and listen.
- ▶ June 13th is the contest day. The students will be in the field from morning until lunch. After lunch, there will be an awards presentation starting around 1:30 PM.

▶ **This is a tentative schedule. Updated schedule will be available at registration.**

## What to bring

- ▶ Clothing/footwear that is appropriate for extended time in an outdoor setting. Weather conditions may vary.
- ▶ Pen or Pencil
- ▶ **Returning New Rangers: Please bring a plant press if you have one.**
- ▶ **We will have bug spray, sunscreen, and water available out in the field.**
- ▶ Anyone needing special accommodations for meals, transportation, etc. should contact:

**Deanna Kunkel**

**(605) 882-4989 ext. 3**



There are blocks of rooms at  
**Quality Inn** • 800 35th St Circle, behind McDonald's • (605) 886-3010  
**Country Inn & Suites** • 3400 8 Ave SE, behind IHOP • (605) 886-8900  
**Days Inn** • 2900 9 Ave SE, by Walmart • (605) 884-5067  
For any reservations, mention Codington Conservation District or Rangeland/Soil Days event.

For information on continuing education credits, please contact:

**Krista Ehlert**

**SDSU Extension State Range Specialist**  
**(605) 394-2236 or [krista.ehlert@sdstate.edu](mailto:krista.ehlert@sdstate.edu)**



**SOUTH DAKOTA STATE  
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION**

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*USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.*

The International Society for Range Management convention will be in Spokane, WA, February 8-13, 2025.

**SOUTH DAKOTA**

**19th Annual Soil Days**

**&**

**40th Annual Rangeland Days**

**June 12 & 13, 2024**  
**Watertown, SD**

Hosted by:  
Codington Conservation District  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
SDSU Extension

**Pre-registration is due by**  
**June 2, 2024**



Scan the QR Code to  
register online or visit  
[https://bit.ly/Range\\_Soil\\_Days](https://bit.ly/Range_Soil_Days)

*You're  
Invited!*

# WOMEN ON THE RANGE

## GRAZING WORKSHOP

**JULY**  
**8-10**

**Cost: \$175**

**Includes meals: 7/8 = lunch, supper; 7/9 = lunch, supper; 7/10 = lunch**

**Location: Wedge Tent Ranch, Faith, SD**

**Come join us to learn more about grazing ecology and management, with our host, Shannon Carmichael!!**

***Emphasis of this workshop will be on understanding your system, and not just the parts.***

**Topics will include, but are not limited to:**

- Range health
- How to graze more efficiently
- Principles of grazing
- Ecosystem processes
- The importance of supply and demand in your stocking rates
- Range ecology - the intersection between plants and grazing ruminants

**Registration will be live April 15, 2024 on the SDSU Extension Events Page.**

**For questions and more information:**

- **Wedge Tent Ranch - Shannon Carmichael,**
  - rancherswife2@gmail.com, 605-545-0336
- **SDSU - Krista Ehlert,**
  - krista.ehlert@sdstate.edu, 605-394-2236



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