Spring 2021 Newsletter

South Dakota
GRASSLAND 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. Feel free to share any stories, information, upcoming events, or ideas you are working on - please email your article & pictures to Laura.Beaulieu@conservation.sd by May 15th for the summer 2021 newsletter.

Look for information, specific to the SD Grassland Initiative Benefits following the Partner Updates section (scroll to section)

Central Grasslands Roadmap

The Central Grasslands Roadmap Initiative (CGRI) released its 2024 Annual Report highlighting progress in grassland conservation across the bison. The report highlights the Conservation Delivery Governance Model, of the CGRI. The model has fostered stakeholder leadership, collaboration, and strategic partnerships. This structure, supported by the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies as the backbone organization, has created unique alignments toward overall conservation goals.

A notable accomplishment in 2024 is the enhancement of the Central Grasslands Assessment Map. The updated map now includes additional forest, water, and development layers, offering a more comprehensive view of conservation priorities. This enhancement supports more strategic, integrated habitat and incorporating the latest data to inform conservation strategies. Additionally, CGRI has completed the initiative's targets of the 2018 Grasslands Business Plan for combat pollinators in the bison ecosystem and county seat communities. The initiative also is beyond 10.5 million acres activated by 2030, contributing to 270 million acres by 2040. These efforts are crucial for stabilizing and potentially reversing grassland bird population declines.

The CGRI quarterly newsletter (link on the road map) also which has been instrumental in raising awareness and fostering collaboration among partners. The CGRI Road Map is a living document that offers adaptive engagement with conservation tools from the Bison, Alliance, Cattle to Climate Collaborative, Mission, sharing resources and fostering collaborations to advance grassland conservation.

As we look to the future, we are excited to continue building tools and networks that will expand our collective ability to achieve conservation on a larger scale. This includes ongoing training initiatives and grassland bird surveys, which are essential for maintaining grassland biodiversity. Collaboration with the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies will continue to support the implementation of the American Grasslands Conference June 9 - 20 in Kearney, Nebraska. Here can you Read Read this report here.

You can also find the Central Grasslands Roadmap on Facebook and Instagram!

Private Lands Prescribed Fire Forum

The South Dakota Prescribed Fire Forum took place in December 2021, focusing on the obstacles, opportunities, and updates related to utilizing prescribed fire on private lands.

If you didn't make it, or if you have a topic that's of you'd like to share with others, recordings of the forum are posted on YouTube with the link.

Rangeland & Soil Days

The 2021 Rangeland & Soil days will take place near Spearfish. More information is available at https://www.sdsnrdrangeland.com/south-dakota-rangeland-days.html.

Land year job, and want to recruit others to the natural resources career field?

Headed by Mitch Iverson and Bill Colson, conservationists have begun on how to highlight the variety of career opportunities that similar around natural resources may be outside the into the traditional "conservation" jobs.

It takes a phone or your laptop on a ship job (with a capital!) to ribbit-ribbit!! Wait-pun. These will be used to create a slideshow for various student/youth events. The goal is to show what variety, or **quick submissions from every** could be appreciated!

Do you have a job that you think would be a great fit for a young person and there is a desire to have at least the option at the event with handouts, resources and examples. If you'd like to send resources or pics of the green! Happening during the school day, email Mitch Iverson at mitch.iverson@sd.gov.

Or if you'd be interested in helping share the resources prepared and participate in a panel and that takes place in your area, let Laura Kuther, Mitch or Bill know so you to looped into conversations.

SD Game, Fish & Parks

Michael Fischer has been selected to serve as Private Lands Habitat Biologist for South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks. Fischer's position is funded in part by Bird Conservancy and will cover the northeast part of the state. Here are the words from Michael:

My name is Michael Fischer. I grew up in Watertown, SD and graduated from SDSU with a degree in Natural Resource Management. I have been with the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Habitat Biology as a partner biologist stationed in Watertown, SD for two years. I then hitched up with Prairiewise Forever in Utah working exclusively on Sage Grouse habitat projects. After five years in the sagebrush I decided it was time to return to the Midwest and I ended up in Colorado. For the past two and a half years I have been overseeing conservation operations for a large cattle company. I am excited to start my new role with SDGFP and relocate my family back to South Dakota this spring.

Kaiser Carlson

Kaiser Carlson continues to expand their work in South Dakota grasslands with a new "toolbox of the ground" now in the Northern Great Plains. Field Smith gave an exciting in spotlight on Kaiser's work in the March 2021 newsletter. Kaiser's toolbox includes a variety of tools for rational of which planning, specifically detailed plant species inventories and a new tool for optimal stocking rates, virtual fence line placement, and how that relates to animal, rangeland, and economic performance. Kaiser's tools are complimentary to the SD GLI tools.

We could also be a highlight in partnership with Audubon Conservation Fund, Audubon Dakotas, Audubon and the National Audubon Society. Kaiser is thrilled to leverage its regenerative grazing toolbit to help Audubon Dakotas secure grazing financial support for implementing improved grazing practices to help build and protect landbirds through grazing improvements.

Ducks Unlimited: One Year Into the Working Greatlands Partnership

It's been just over one year since the USDA announced a new award to Ducks Unlimited through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). Under this endeavor, seven conservation partners will work with ranchers and landowners to implement grazing improvements and workers interested in planting marginal cropland back to grass, while maintaining working lands at the same time.

Ducks Unlimited's RCPP model allows DU to offer annual incentive payments directly to participants for the first three years after planting grass during the establishment phase. Typically, during this phase, landowners have to option for income, which can be a major hindrance to participation. Ducks Unlimited's model provides a direct payment to offset the forage loss or grazing by the participation. This model has proven to be very attractive to South Dakota landowners and has been instrumental in helping to increase livelihood grazing capacity.

The Working Greatlands Partnership RCPP includes Ducks Unlimited and the National Resources Conservation Service, along with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks, South Dakota State University, Ducks Unlimited, and Audubon Dakotas. Collectively, the partnership provides over 10 field staff who are available to provide technical assistance to participants. Ducks Unlimited has also leveraged its partnership with Audubon Dakotas in agreements to restore over 2,200 acres of marginal cropland, mostly in Corson County, to bison, Dakotas more cooperators are planning projects for 2021.

"Unfortunately, our project is temporarily frozen, due to the nature of federal contributions and the timeline of our project. We are hopeful that we will be able to restart in 2022 and we will get back to work ahead of the spring planting season," says Bryce Tuck, DU Manager of Conservation Programs in South Dakota.

Ducks Unlimited is thrilled to be a part of this project, or, and tricyclo-sulfo-RCPP, RCPP, and continue a consultation.

South Dakota Ag Land Trust Hires Project Manager for Western SD

South Dakota Agricultural Land Trust (SDALT) recently hired Kaylee Gaarder Project Manager to lead efforts to protect working lands and open space in western South Dakota. Gaarder is a native of Belle Fourche, SD and a graduate of SDSU. Gaarder's prior work includes a variety of jobs in ranch and farm, including the Nature Conservancy's Grassland Program. Additional education programs with the National Park and Wildlife Foundation, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, and the Ducks Unlimited.

"I have been that more than one directly residential development of a ranch property and Grassland values and the ability of ranch families to retain their property as agriculture." Gaarder said. "I am very excited to be a part of this Ag Boom testimonial who are seeking assistance from SDALT with this challenging issue."

SDALT was founded by the South Dakota Cattlemen's Association, South Dakota Association of Conservation Districts, South Dakota Grassland Coalition, and South Dakota Farm Bureau Foundation to work with landowners to conserve South Dakota's agricultural heritage and ensure the viability of family farms and ranches.

You can learn more about the Trust at www.sdagtrust.org.

Pheasants Forever: Cost-Share Program Establishing or Managing High Quality Pollinator Habitat (SD Celebrate Stepper Program)

Pheasants Forever applied for and received a grant from the Xerces Society and Wildlife Foundation's Monarch Butterfly and Other Pollinators Fund. The grant is for **$120** to establish pollinator habitat on the project and can provide funding for projects that are in the Celebrate Stepper Program, spread the word far and wide of this amazing project.

Cost-Share Amounts

Seed Costs: Up to $1000 an acre
Pin Flat Costs: Up to $40 an acre
Stepping Infrastructure - Trout Island ESAP Stepper:
- Seed Costs: Up to $1000 an acre
- Multi-Stem Blanket Wire Fence: Up to $0.50 Foot

For all inquiries, please email: coangwerth@pheasantsforever.org

South Dakota NCAA - Grazing Management School

Thirty-plus SDSU grazing graduates were certified as the three-day grazing management workshop came to a close February 5, 2021 in Winner, South Dakota. Dr. Llewellyn Manske expressed that "the goal of the workshop was to provide participants with a toolbox of ideas." Dr. Manske and Range Scientists from USDA-Dickinson Research Center teached from 8 - 5 years of research, grazing management principles which will gain more health from the land. Tracy Berdt, Director of Conservation Programs for the Ducks Unlimited, Inc. in Bismarck, ND, shared the experience of the positive application of Texas Cross Rotational Grazing, adapted to Eastern Dakota. Participants also learned from Dr. Jeff Lake, Dr. Jeff Lake, Dr. Jeff Lake,