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**FEBRUARY
2010**

South Dakota
**Wildlife
Federation**

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OUT OF DOORS

Affiliated with the National Wildlife Federation

VOLUME 50, NUMBER 2

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Saving wildlife habitat

From a tractor seat this spring, Gordon Heber knows what he'll witness as winter releases its grip on the 1,200 acres of farmland and prairie he owns in Douglas County: a burst of wildlife that includes pheasants, fawns and ducks. "It's just amazing," said the Sioux Falls resident, who spends about 70 days a year tending to his corn, soybeans and hay - as well as the numerous windbreaks, enhanced waterways, grasslands and wetlands he's added through the Conservation Reserve Program.

"As a landowner, if I like wildlife, I can pick and choose what conservation things are most beneficial to wildlife I'd like to have on my property," added Heber, who has about 45 percent of his land locked into CRP contracts. "And that makes you feel really good."

A new CRP general sign-up will help save thousands of acres of wilderness habitat across the country, including land in South Dakota that's good for duck, pheasant, bobwhite quail and prairie grouse populations, conservationists say.

The general sign-up - the first since 2006 - will happen later this year, after an Environmental Impact Statement is filed, said U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, who made the announcement at the Pheasants Forever national convention in Des Moines recently.

"It is my goal to ensure that we maximize CRP enrollment - and holding a general CRP sign-up is an additional step we can take to enroll acres in this program," he said.

That affirmation comes at a time when millions of CRP acres are set to expire, and farmers recalculate the economic benefits of crops versus conservation. In South Dakota, that pits profitable soybean and corn crops for biofuels and animal feed against the state's reputation as the best upland gamebird hunting destination in the world. And to each argument, there are positives and negatives.

Broader goal of programs: Boost rural economies
Vilsack's announcement doesn't necessarily mean a philosophical shift within the USDA and the Obama administration, but it is a commitment to use a successful tool in different ways, said Farm Service Agency Administrator Jonathan Coppess.

"We're targeting the limited acres and funding toward where it does the most conservation good and gets us the highest amounts of benefits, so that's not a change," Coppess said. "A lot of these lands, you just see an incred-

ible resurgence of pheasants in parts of the country and wildlife and what that then brings - and what the secretary's pointing out - is how CRP fits into his bigger vision of regional rural development, how all of these things play into it. You use all the tools the USDA has to help rural economies."

The 25-year-old CRP program protects millions of acres across the U.S. from topsoil erosion by paying landowners rent to keep the lands unplowed or establish native grasses, shrubs, trees and wetlands. The contracts last from 10 to 15 years and pay, on average, \$53 an acre.

Farmers, ranchers and landowners will get \$1.7 billion in payments this year.

While curbing soil erosion was the primary goal of the program, it's also led to better water quality, more and better wildlife habitat and more wildlife, conservationists say.

"We know that CRP has a lot of benefits for pheasants, but also for our prairie grouse and all our nongame migratory birds," said Chad Switzer, state Game, Fish & Parks terrestrial program administrator. "Some of those birds are really struggling with their populations, and anytime you keep habitat on the ground or add new grassland - quality grassland habitat - that's a good thing."

Nationally, about 4.4 million CRP acres are set to expire in September. Another 14.2 million acres are slated to expire between 2011 and 2013.

In South Dakota, 190,986 acres expired Sept. 30. Another 606,122 acres will expire between 2010 and 2013.

The state has about 1.2 million CRP acres enrolled and reached a peak of 1.8 million acres in 1998.

Farmers often must choose between conservation, business

With commodity prices running high and a new generation of farmers clamoring for land, it's sometimes hard to balance the good CRP has meant for conservation versus what is a good business decision, landowners say.

"I like the program, but I don't like what it does to small communities," said Paul Brandt of Clear Lake, who raises corn and soybeans and feeds cattle and hogs in Deuel County. He said he has a few acres in CRP, mostly in shelter belts.

"You know, there's a benefit to wildlife, and we've certainly seen that in Deuel County," he said. "But you really don't really have an industry based on that here."

... Continued on page 8

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Executive Director's Update *by Chris Hesla*

I do want to thank all of you who take time out of your busy schedule to email, write or call your Senators and Representatives

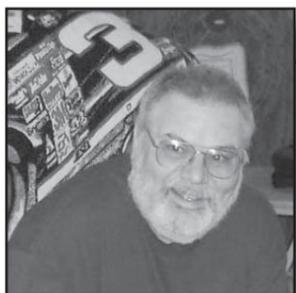
South Dakota's 85th Legislative Session is basically over. This year, SDWF monitored 25 different bills and 1 resolution. We (sportsmen/women) who live here or visit had a successful legislative session. We killed or amended every piece of legislation that we (SDWF Board) were concerned with, which could possibly interfere with all of our outdoor pursuits. The secret to our success is the experience Dave Nauman has gained lobbying for us for over 25 years, our active membership, and very active Board of Directors. I send out a daily or sometimes twice daily electronic updates that include the bill number, my analysis of the bill, reasons we want it to pass or fail, the location and a direct link to every bill. You do not need to be a member of SDWF to get my updates, the only requirement needed is to care about our hunting and fishing heritage! THANK YOU, to all of you that helped with messaging your legislators this year. We can and do make a difference in our legislature.

We had the unique experience this year to work on a Governor appointment to the GF&P Commission. Most times these appointments basically go unnoticed and uncontested by most. Last month, Governor Rounds nominated John Cooper to the GF&P Commission. If you recall, John served as Department Secretary of Game, Fish & Parks for 12 years and prior to that was a special agent for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. He had a very

colorful past as an undercover agent arresting poachers all over the U.S. John has been very active in legal issues dealing with South Dakota's Indian tribes, worked many years on Missouri River issues and was one of the main drivers in getting the Corps of Engineers lands along the Missouri River given back to the State for our recreation use. In doing those jobs, he was always a guy who never backed down from a fight and always told you the truth. Right or wrong, John was always honest and fair in his dealings with sportsmen/women and the landowners of SD.

To say his confirmation created a stir would be an understatement. Confirmation starts out at the Senate Agriculture Committee level, the appointee is introduced, and they take public testimony both pro and con. The supporters testify and I think there were perhaps six, including me representing the SDWF, who spoke in favor of John's appointment. Then the cons have their time to testify why they do not think John should be appointed. Getting up to testify against John were five ranchers from the Wall area who most of them were arrested or were affected by John when the USFWS investigated illegal deer hunting in the Wall, SD area. It must have been nearly 15 to 20 years ago when they prosecuted at that time what was known as Dakota Safaris. Several of the members of Dakota Safaris were arrested for supplying "ranch tags" to pay-

... Continued from page 2



President's Column *by Rieck Eske*

The Legislative session is winding down for the year; we have won a few battles, but haven't won the war.

We have succeeded in killing the following bills: HB1066—Issuance of landowner-sponsored big game hunting licenses. HB1067—Restrict entry of Conservation Officers onto certain private land without permission. HB1098—Require state agencies to conduct public hearing before acquiring certain real estate. HB1113—Specify certain animal species for animal damage control. HB1114—Borden the policy reviews committee for animal damage control. HB1115—Provide for annual audits of the state predatory animal control fund. HB1121—Require a permit and fee for public access on certain school and public lands and to establish a penalty. HB1127—Authorize landowners and lessees to possess certain game animals and game bird trophies. HB1139—Clarify the application of common law civil trespass on agricultural land and to provide for the recovery of liquidated damages against

trespassers. HB1242—Require that certain land acquisitions by the State of South Dakota be conditioned upon subsequent legislative approval.

We are still working on defeating the following bill (which should be settled before you read this): HB1264—free antlerless tags to landowners. This law specifically exempts landowners from the License fee and \$5.00 surcharge.

I want to thank everyone who has called or emailed legislators and letting them know where you stand. Also a very big THANK YOU to Chris, Dave and Bill Antonides for being in Pierre and fighting our fight and reading and clarifying the bills so we could understand them.

I would also like to welcome John Cooper to the South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks Commission.

Carry on the tradition!

Please email or call your Representatives and tell them to vote no on these Bills.



USPS 503-320
ISSN 0883-6809



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South Dakota Wildlife Federation OUT OF DOORS is the official monthly publication of the South Dakota Wildlife Federation (SDWF), a private, non-profit statewide organization of affiliated organizations and individuals incorporated under South Dakota laws. Subscription to this publication is through membership in the SDWF or direct contact with the SDWF, PO Box 7075, Pierre, SD 57501. All communications regarding advertising, editorial, circulation and SDWF matters may be sent to SDWF OUT OF DOORS, PO Box 7075, Pierre, South Dakota 57501. Permission to reprint articles normally given providing proper credit is given the publication and author. Views expressed by free lance writers are their own and do not necessarily express those of the publication or the SDWF.

Printed by Curt Merriman Printing, Inc.
P.O. Box 1046, 306 S. Coteau, Pierre, SD 57501
Subscription Rate - \$10.00 per year or with membership in SDWF
Individual members devote approximately 40 cents of their annual dues for each copy of the newspaper.
Entered as Periodicals Postage Paid at Pierre, SD 57501
POSTMASTER: Send address changes
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... *Exec. Dir. Continued from page 2*

ing customers or using illegally the landowners own deer license to shoot a big buck for money and allowing them to take the illegally taken head or horns across state lines (Lacey Act). After these five landowners spoke their peace, Mike Held with the Farm Bureau, Representative Betty Olson, and Representative Lance Russell testified against John. The vote in Committee has two choices; to support or not support the appointment. The Senate Ag vote 7 yeas and 2 nays on "not to support" John in his appointment.

The confirmation then goes to the Senate Floor where John's supporters (SDWF membership and the Governor's office) got to work the entire floor and lobby for votes from all of the senators. It is a very good thing that the entire senate has a much more open mind than

the Ag. Committee. The vote was deferred an extra day, because the opponents to John did not have the votes to stop his appointment. The vote was taken on Thursday and John was supported by the Senate on a vote of 22 to 12 in support of him. John has sent me a note expressing his gratitude for our support and wanted to thank all of our membership for their support. He is looking forward to working with the GF&P Commission starting next month in Huron.

It was not too many years ago, SDWF faced an appointment of a new Commissioner by Gov. Rounds that we did not want to see appointed. In fact we rumbled the halls with our displeasure, however we did not try to block his appointment to the Commission in the

Senate. After some very long meetings, we decided to take the high road as an organization and SDWF did not oppose the appointment. We still believe today that those diverse opinions and diverse backgrounds all are an important part of any board or commission to function in a healthy productive way. Mert Clarkson, since his appointment, has been a very good and fair commissioner and is doing a very good job in my opinion.

It is too bad that the same people who supported Mert's appointment at that time, do not have the same attitude and open mind as the rest of us here in South Dakota.

Thanks again for supporting our legislative efforts!

"After the Smoke Clears"

by Bill Antonides

The 2010 legislative season is drawing to an end as of this writing, with the major duties of the legislature still unfulfilled. Unlike the U.S. Congress, our state must balance its budget. Right now the legislature needs between 40 and 50 million dollars, an immense amount of money for a sparsely populated state. The details on how the legislature intends to overcome this budget deficit are just now being made public. Good men and women are working hard to solve these problems.

However, rather than try to solve the great problems of society, some lawmakers seem to expend much of their time on efforts to reallocate the ownership of our natural resources. Sportsmen and legislators alike waste precious time and money bickering over questions asked and answered a century or more ago. Who owns the wildlife? Who should have access to public land? Should there be two classes of citizens, some with more privileges than others? It is sad we all have to spend so much time every year fighting the same old fights in the legislature. Old legislation in a bright new wrapper is still old legislation. Nevertheless, the bills we killed this year will be back again. With your help, we'll be there to fight them.

There were nearly 475 bills in the 2010 legislature, of which just over twenty were carefully monitored by the South Dakota Wildlife Federation. The Federation has a presence in the legislature every single day of the session to make sure our legislators understand the facts behind each bill. If it were not for the Federation and the outspoken sportsmen and women of the state, the majority of the bills we were against would likely have become law. We need to give a huge amount of well-deserved credit to the majority of our state legislators. Most are sensible people who are willing to listen to reason, who really care about preserving our way of life, and who truly want to leave something for our grandchildren other than a bill for our excesses.



The snow is leaving and the geese are returning. Better days are ahead!

A careful review of the proposed laws for this session tells us that sportsmen were once again being asked, in one way or another, to subscribe to a philosophy which presumes the rich and the landed should have greater access to public resources than the average person. Whether it was deer tags to be sold by landowners to the highest bidder, unreasonable restrictions on purchases of Game Production Areas, or eliminating hunting on road right-of-ways, the message was clear: If we carry a gun afield but don't carry a huge balance in our checkbooks, we are, to some folks at least, second-class citizens.

One piece of legislation this session asked the average hunter to pay a special fee to use School and Public lands. Frankly, I suspect most sportsmen would be happy to contribute license dollars to better post the lands and improve the habitat. However, a tax for no apparent reason other than to limit use of these lands by most hunters is not justifiable, and we said so loud and clear. This might have been an opportunity to benefit all concerned, but change requires careful thought and cooperation among the agencies and people involved. The fact of the matter is, sportsmen have always carried their own weight, and insist on doing so. They are resolute in their desire for the GF&P to purchase more Game Production Areas for the use and benefit of

all, but also willingly pay for the cost of the land and the annual bills for maintenance and taxes.

Sadly, a couple of good bills we supported did not go through, including one which would have dropped property taxes for farmers and ranchers who kept valuable grassland from being plowed. Another bill to change the layout of the GF&P Commission initially had only limited appeal, but received broad support after it was amended with our help. The amended version clarified that independents could be on the commission, ranchers could serve on the commission as agricultural interests, and people who were truly farmers and ranchers but lived in town would be included as ag producers. The bill was killed for unknown reasons.

We also helped John Cooper make it onto the GF&P Commission this session. Mr. Cooper made many enemies when he was a federal law enforcement officer and again when he was the Secretary of the GF&P. These people, who did not want him on the Commission, are not happy with those of us who helped get him through the Senate confirmation process. Then again, they are some of the same people we angered when we fought against bad legislation. It is possible that a few more private lands will be closed to the sportsmen and women who dared to speak up for what they thought was right. This makes our struggle to increase the amount of public land and to protect and improve what we have even more important. Although this is no easy task, someday, perhaps, our children and grandchildren will thank us for what we did to ensure the future of our natural resources.

Bill Antonides is a retired wildlife conservation officer, a certified wildlife biologist, and a vice president in the SDWF. He can be reached by e-mail at billantonides@abe.midco.net

Corn equals pheasant's myth

George M. Vandel

Recently, members of the South Dakota Corn Growers Association have made public comments stating that the pheasant population in the state is positively tied to and is in fact dependent on our corn acreage. Or, simply put, that "corn equals pheasants." They also claim that losses to our grassland acreage are minimal and will not negatively impact our pheasant population. This rhetoric is totally false. Here are some corn and pheasant facts:

* Fact: Among the top corn-growing states in the nation, South Dakota is No. 6, annually producing 544.5 million bushels. Iowa is first, annually producing almost 2.37 billion bushels. Illinois is second, Nebraska third, Minnesota fourth and Indiana fifth.

If you apply the South Dakota Corn Growers' "corn equals pheasants" belief to these corn-production facts, and given that South Dakota recently has enjoyed almost 10 million pheasants, then Iowa should have 43.5 million pheasants, Illinois 42 million, Nebraska 27 million, Minnesota 21 million and Indiana 18 million. The reality is that pheasant hunters from these states come to South Dakota for birds because despite all their corn, these states don't have any pheasants.

* Fact: According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, South Dakota's corn acreage increased from 3.6 million acres in 1999 to 5 million acres in 2009 - a 10-year increase in corn acreage of 1.4 million acres. USDA also documented a loss of almost 50,000 acres of native prairie grassland per year during that same period.

Again, according to USDA, land enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program - or CRP - declined from a high of almost 1.8 million acres to its present level of 1 million acres. And unless or until USDA changes its practices, our CRP acreage base will continue to decline. During the past 10 years when the loss of native prairie acres is combined with the loss of CRP acres, South Dakota has lost more than 1 million acres of grassland.

* Fact: One of the main factors causing the increase in corn acreage and a corresponding decrease in grass acreage in South Dakota is the increased demand for corn by the ethanol industry.

* Fact: The ethanol industry is heavily subsidized by taxpayers. It is subsidized at the distillery, at the pump and in the cornfield. The American taxpayer pays 45



cents per gallon to produce ethanol. We provide gas tax exemptions at the pump (the tax on gasoline is 22 cents per gallon vs. eight cents for ethanol). In addition, in South Dakota

from 1995 to 2006 corn subsidies of almost \$2.1 billion were paid to corn growers.

In South Dakota we generally don't mind that our taxes are used to support the corn/ethanol industry and our local corn producers. But, please, we deserve to be told the truth about all the costs involved, including the documented and factual loss of more than 1 million acres of grassland habitat and the negative impacts that this will have on our wildlife.

* Fact: Corn is not a pheasant-population limiting factor. Or put another way, if our corn acreage declines, we will not observe a similar decline in our pheasant population. Conversely, grass-nesting cover, especially the dense, undisturbed nesting habitat provided by CRP, is a documented pheasant-population limiting factor.

In South Dakota, ups and downs in our pheasant population are in direct proportion to increases or decreases in our idled grass (Soil Bank or CRP) acreage. As we lose grass, we observe a direct decline in our pheasant population as well as all of our grass-nesting prairie bird species.

* Fact: If you hunt pheasants in South Dakota or if you have a business that profits from pheasant hunting, you best get prepared for fewer pheasants as our grassland acres decline.

If you want to grow corn, ask the members and experts of the South Dakota Corn Growers Association. Past performance indicates that they are good at growing corn.

However, if you want to grow pheasants, ask the experts at the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks Wildlife Division. Likewise, history has shown that they know pheasants.

Additional Facts

MY VOICE

George M. Vandel, 60, of Pierre is retired. He worked for the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks Wildlife Division as an assistant director from 1986 to 2008.

TIPs License Donations Top \$14,000

South Dakota sportsmen donated over \$14,000 to the Turn In Poachers program during the 2009 big game license season.

The 1,700 sportsmen not only contributed cash and checks, but also took advantage of the opportunity to donate funds as part of the process for purchasing general hunting, fishing and trapping licenses and applying for big game licenses.

Money donated during license sales is added to other donations as the financial foundation for the TIPs program, making it possible for conservation law enforcement officers to pay rewards that lead to successful wildlife criminal cases.

During the 2008/2009 fiscal year, the TIPs program was responsible for generating almost 500 cases and netting more than 80 arrests. During the period, \$6,545 was paid in rewards to people who reported violations.

"It is impressive to see sportsmen step up to protect our resources from those who steal from the citizens of the state," said Shon Eide, state Game, Fish and Parks

Department licensing supervisor. "It is amazing what can happen when a lot of people who share a common value come together and fund a program like TIPs."

The TIPs program is collaboration between GFP and Wildlife Protection, Inc., a non-profit group that helps oversee the program. TIPs provide opportunities for those who witness or have knowledge of wildlife criminal activities to report them to authorities by directly contacting GFP conservation officers, GFP offices, or through a toll-free telephone number (1-888-683-7224).

"Whether or not people accept rewards for their information, the TIPs program provides a conduit that might not otherwise be available for citizens to pass critical information to investigators," said Charlie Wharton, TIPs coordinator.

"We would like to thank everyone who made donations to TIPs," Wharton said. "Whether the gifts were \$2 or \$200, their generosity will be used to protect South Dakota's resources and promote a better quality of life for all who enjoy nature."

"pheasant population are in direct proportion to increases or decreases in our idled grass"

"\$6,545 was paid in rewards to people who reported violations"

Beadle County Sportsmen's Club (BCSC) has a Big Buck contest & Longest Fish

Every January Beadle County Sportsmen's Club (BCSC) has a Big Buck contest and this Year we expanded to a Longest Fish contest also. It was held on Tuesday January 13th at our monthly meeting. We are proud of this event and wanted to ask if you would have room in the S. Dak. Out of Doors magazine to put these pictures.



Rifle Elk - Larry Picek
Rifle Mule Deer - Tony Olson
Archery Whitetail - Ryan Eichstadt
Rifle Whitetail - Mike Graff



Longest Other Game Fish Hook & Line - Greg Weeldreyer (Salmon)
Longest Game Fish By Other Method - Larry Picek (Walleye shot while diving)
Longest Walleye By Hook & Line - Danny Kempf (31" its on the wall)



all who brought Horns

Construction starts on GF&P outdoor campus

Ducks floating on a nearby pond provided a perfect backdrop at the groundbreaking ceremony for the new South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks' Outdoor Campus West. Located on 33 acres off Sturgis Road near the Hills Materials office, the site will house an outdoor learning center and regional office. "This is truly going to be a facility that the state of South Dakota, our department and this community can be proud of," GF&P secretary Jeff Vonk said Friday. Ten years in the making, the learning center will be an attraction where visitors can come to experience what western South Dakota has to offer for outdoor recreation, Vonk said. The final cost of the center is estimated at \$12.5 million. Funding will come from federal sources and a portion of state hunting and fishing license revenue over the past four years. J. Scull Construction has the \$9.8 million contract to build the center, which is

scheduled to open in April 2011. "This is really a fulfilling moment," GF&P Chairman Spencer Hawley said. More than 100,000 people visited the Sioux Falls outdoor campus last year to get a glimpse of the outdoor experience in South Dakota, according to Tony Leif, director of the GF&P Division of Wildlife. Another 35,000 people participated in educational programming to learn about hunting, fishing, outdoor education and outdoor recreation. "The key element of making that thing work is the cooperation that we get with the communities we're serving," Leif said. Volunteers and local financial support play an important role in the center's objectives. Hawley praised the Rapid City community for its commitment to the project. Support for the project has exceeded all expectations. "To Rapid City: Thank you for what you've done," he said.

About \$497,000 has been pledged to the project, and the South Dakota Parks and Wildlife Foundation's fundraising campaign has not yet begun in earnest. "This is a project that sells itself," foundation president Everett Hoyt said. In addition to its educational mission, the outdoor center will serve as a base of operations for GF&P's western region. Leif emphasized that state hunters' license fees helped make the project possible. "It's also important for us to be here and offer those educational opportunities to the young folks who may or may not become license buyers," Leif said. "All in all, we can still grow the appreciation out there for wildlife and for outdoor resources, whether or not those individuals get to the point of buying a hunting or fishing license."

"Conservation means development as much as it does protection. I recognize the right and duty of this generation to develop and use the natural resources of our land; but I do not recognize the right to waste them, or to rob, by wasteful use, the generations that come after us."
Theodore Roosevelt, the "New Nationalism" speech, Osawatomie, Kansas, August 31, 1910

South Dakota Wildlife Federation Donors

At the recent Winter Board Meeting the SDWF Board created the SDWF Wildlife Legacy Council. The Council was created to allow recognition of the people who support SDWF above and beyond their membership and raffle donations.

Thank you to the following donors for their contributions to the SDWF. Please consider becoming a member of the Wildlife Legacy Council. SDWF is a 501(c3) non-profit, all donations are tax deductible.

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Level I Pheasant- \$50-\$99

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S.D. conservationist Michael Williams dies

In a few weeks when ducks and geese are paddling about seasonal wetlands shimmering on the South Dakota landscape, part of Michael Williams' tangible legacy to conservation will be on display.

Williams, 67, of Watertown and the first three-term national president of the Izaak Walton League of America, died Tuesday in Sioux Falls after a long illness.

Before he was elected to lead the national group in 2007, Williams was a key player in South Dakota about a decade ago as conservation groups successfully fought efforts to change the definition of seasonal wetlands so they could be readily drained.

In many ways, the fight defined Williams' views of the outdoors.

"What was really important to him was protecting wetlands and native prairie and clean water. He understood the value of clean water and wetlands, and it was so easy for him to articulate that to people," said Jim Madsen, Izaak Walton League vice president and who will fill Williams' term.

Chuck Clayton of Huron preceded Williams as president. He recalls Williams' commitment to protecting natural resources.

"He never gave up on unpopular ideas. People would get mad at him. He would put himself on the wrong side of public opinion. He still fought for what he thought was right.

"My kid used to own an English bulldog. Mike had the same kind of trait," Clayton said.

Williams regularly had the ear of Sen. Tim Johnson on policy initiatives to preserve and restore prairie ecosystems.

"I have known Mike for many years, and he was always a tireless advocate for conservation and a valuable voice to have in any debate on wildlife issues," Johnson said in a statement. "I will miss his passion and dedication, and I know that the work he has done over the years will continue to be felt across South Dakota."

He was a graduate of Northern State Teacher's College and played on four championship football teams there. After college, Williams taught high school in Frederick, Clark and Watertown before earning a master's degree from the University of Wyoming and working in Colorado.

In 1988, he returned to Watertown and became active in the Izaak Walton League, Ducks Unlimited, South Dakota Wildlife Federation, Upper Big Sioux Watershed Project and the Masons and the Elks.

Perhaps he was such a dogged conservation leader because he knew what was at stake. Williams keenly enjoyed the outdoors he sought to protect. Clayton recalls sitting in duck blinds with him and marveling at the number of song birds Williams could identify by sound alone. South Dakota Ducks Unlimited Chairman Don Aarstad remembers something Williams told his brother, Gary. "He told Gary, 'The earth is God's gift to us. Our gift to Him is to take care of it,'" Aarstad said.

"Wilderness is the raw material out of which man has hammered the artifact called civilization" From A Sand County Almanac by Aldo Leopold

Disappearing Ducks?

ScienceDaily (Feb. 2, 2010) — The loss of wetlands in the prairie pothole region of central North America due to a warmer and drier climate will negatively affect millions of waterfowl that depend on the region for food, shelter and raising young, according to research published February 1 in the journal *BioScience*.

The new research shows that the region appears to be much more sensitive to climate warming and drying than previously thought. “The impact to the millions of wetlands that attract countless ducks to these breeding grounds in spring makes it difficult to imagine how to maintain today’s level of waterfowl populations in altered climate conditions,” said Dr. Glenn Guntenspergen, a U.S. Geological Survey researcher and one of the report authors. “Parents may not have time to raise their young to where they can fly because of wetlands drying up too quickly in the warming climate of the future,” he added.

A new wetland model developed by the authors to understand the impacts of climate change on wetlands in the prairie pothole region projected major reductions in water volume, shortening of the time water remains in wetlands and changes to wetland vegetation dynamics in this 800,000-square kilometer region in the United States (North and South Dakota, Montana, Minnesota and Iowa) and Canada.



Many wetland species -- such as waterfowl and amphibians -- require a minimum time in water to complete their life cycles. For example, most dabbling ducks -- such as mallards and teal-- require at least 80 to 110 days of surface water for their young to grow to where they can fly and for breeding adults to complete molting, the time when birds are flightless while growing new feathers. In addition, an abundance of wetlands are needed because breeding waterfowl typically isolate themselves from others of the same species. “Unfortunately, the model simulations show that under forecasted climate-change scenarios for this region (an increase of 4-degrees Celsius), the western prairie potholes will be too dry and the eastern ones will have too few functional wetlands and nesting habitat to support historical levels of waterfowl and

other wetland-dependent species,” said Dr. W. Carter Johnson, another study author and a researcher at South Dakota State University. The authors noted that their model allowed a more comprehensive analysis of climate change impacts across the northern prairies because it simultaneously examined the hydrology and vegetation dynamics of the wetland complex, which are both important for the wildlife that depend on the prairie potholes for part or all of their life cycles.

“Our results indicate that the prairie wetlands are highly vulnerable to climate warming, and are less resilient than we previously believed,” said Guntenspergen. “All but the very wettest of the historic boom years for waterfowl production in the more arid parts of the prairie pothole region may be bust years in a 4-degrees Celsius warmer climate.”

These findings may serve as a foundation for managers and policy makers to develop management plans to prepare for and adapt to climate change in the prairie pothole region. The article, *Prairie wetland complexes as landscape functional units in a changing climate*, was published in *BioScience* (60[2]:128-140) and authored by researchers with South Dakota State University, the U.S. Geological Survey, University of Montana, St. Olaf College, The Desert Research Institute-University of Nevada, and the University of Idaho.

“One does not hunt in order to kill. One kills in order to have hunted.”
Spanish philosopher Jose Ortegay Gasset in *Meditations on Hunting*

Winter Habitat Key to Pheasant Survival



The winter of 2009-2010 is already one for the record books, leaving many South Dakotans wondering how their state bird, the pheasant, can

survive the elements.

A Christmas storm brought widespread blizzard conditions. Since then, subsequent blasts of snow, wind, and freezing rain have belted the state. Harsh conditions can lead to high mortality for pheasants and other wildlife, but providing critical winter habitat – such as woody cover and food plots – can boost winter survival.

“Fortunately, pheasants rarely starve to death even during the harshest winters because of available food plots and waste grain,” said South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks resource biologist Andy Gabbert of Sioux Falls. “Most winter mortality is due to predation, although exposure to severe weather can also cause mortalities.”

Large cattail sloughs provide excellent winter cover for pheasants during most winters. In extreme conditions, quality winter roosting habitat such as wide shelterbelts with low-growing shrubs and coniferous trees is critical, he said.

GFP annually maintains 11,000 acres of food plots and 8,500 acres of planted woody habitat on Game Production Areas. Additionally, GFP and Pheasants Forever shared the cost of about 25,000 acres of food plots on private land in 2009.

“Pheasants will travel several miles to find quality winter cover that is adjacent to a food source, such as a food plot or harvested grain fields, during harsh conditions,” Gabbert said.

GFP has received several requests in recent weeks to supplement feed for pheasants.

“In reality, feeding pheasants can attract birds into marginal habitat where they are more susceptible to harsh weather or predators,” said GFP upland game biologist Travis Runia of Huron. “Providing food plots and woody cover in close proximity on an annual basis are really the best ways to sustain pheasant populations in winters like this.”

Concerned citizens may start preparing for the next harsh winter by contacting GFP for technical and financial assistance on woody habitat and food plot programs. Visit <http://www.sdgfp.info/Wildlife/privatelands/Index.htm> to learn more about the available cost-share for establishing wildlife habitat on private lands.

.....Continued from page 1

According to GF&P statistics, sportsmen spent \$1.4 million hunting pheasants in Deuel County in 2008. The average value of an acre of Deuel County pastureland in 2008 was \$1,160, with an average cash rental rate of \$42.20, according to USDA statistics.

Brant used the example of what he said he watched happen in Deuel County when about 40,000 productive acres were enrolled in CRP 10 years ago.

"If a guy could farm 2,000 acres, that's 20 families that could have made money on those 40,000 acres," he said. "So it did quite a bit to the local communities. Those input costs of \$75 to maybe \$100 an acre didn't get spent in the local communities, so there's some offset there."

Brant and other landowners said CRP rental payments are completely outstripped by what a landowner can get if he or she rents it out to farming.

"You have to have a rental rate that competes with crop farming," Brant said. "It's just a different perspective. When you're farming, you sometimes have to go fence line to fence line, 'cause if the land is tillable, you till it. You're competing against the neighbor next door who's cash-renting his ground for \$120 an acre. If you don't go paying the going rate, you're not going to be in the farming business anymore."

'There's more to the program than the rental payments'

The government, Coppess said, simply has a

set amount for the program.

"We do our best to try and keep that in line with the local markets," he said. "I think it's going to be very hard to compete. I mean, we've seen that with commodity prices going up in the last few years. But again, reminding the farmers of the other benefits for it, I think will help. There's more to the program than the rental payments."

And in South Dakota, that means pheasants. Sport hunters spent more than \$219 million during the 2007 and 2008 seasons chasing the state bird.

Most of those birds spring from CRP set-aside acres - from grassland nesting areas to shelter belts and wetlands where hens and roosters find refuge in winter.

"I know a lot of guys are pushing pencils to paper, and for some, it's just more economical to convert land back and farm it," the GF&P's Switzer said. "Others have a different priority, a different objective with their management. They want to try and maintain a balance of wildlife habitat on their land." Heber acknowledges the economics of putting profitable cropland back into production. He's got a large piece of tillable Douglas County land coming out of CRP in 2011.

"I'll enroll some of it, the marginal portions, but I'll probably farm the rest," he said. "But for me, conservation programs allow me to do a whole lot more for conservation and wildlife than I can afford to do on my own." CRP must shift continually in search of perfect balance

And what's good for CRP is good for pheasants, said Dave Nomsen, Pheasants Forever's vice president of governmental affairs.

"Considering the severity of this winter and sizeable number of acres set to expire from CRP this year, the secretary's announcement is very welcome news for wildlife and hunters," Nomsen said. "(The) USDA's actions will benefit birds tomorrow."

As CRP goes forward, officials with the USDA know they must be able to continually shift the program, take advantage of different practices, to find a balance between what's good for the land and what makes the most economic sense for the landowner.

"We need to do a better job of listening to the farmers who are in the program, the landowners in the program, and see what they are seeing with the program, what things are working and what things aren't, and we can actually make adjustments," Coppess said. "But you also want to be careful. You don't want to fix what isn't broken. For 25 years, CRP has not been broken in no real way, shape or form. And a lot of what we need to do now, well, I don't want to say tinkering, just continue to do the improvements to better target, shape and use what we have."

Poll: Majority of hunters mentor youth

Adult sportsmen and women reported an impressive level of mentoring to young hunters on a recent HunterSurvey.com study commissioned by the National Shooting Sports Foundation.

More than 77 percent of active hunters and target shooters indicated they had taken their sons and daughters hunting. Even adults without a child or stepchild got into the act, with 56 percent of them reporting they also took a young person hunting.

"The information collected from this and other research projects will prove valuable in determining how hunters first entered the sport and what youth projects can be initiated to help increase participation in hunting and shooting sports in the future," said Jim Curcuruto, NSSF's director of research and analysis.

"The National Shooting Sports Foundation is proud to partner with Southwick Associates on research projects such as this."

The poll also shows 83.4 percent of young

people were introduced to hunting, even if they didn't carry a firearm or bow, before they turned 13 years old, which is a critical factor in ensuring the next generation will be avid, lifelong hunters.

The average age of the mentor was 38, according to a concurrent study conducted by the NSSF. A majority of adult hunters, 61.7 percent, first introduce a young person to hunting when they are between the ages of 30 and 45. Mentoring is an important component not only for recruiting new hunters but for ensuring experienced sportsmen and women continue spending time afield. The majority of adult hunters, 55.3 percent, reported they took young men hunting while 10.1 percent said they mentored young females, according to HunterSurvey.com. More than 34 percent of hunters reported they mentored both sexes, though, which increases the percentage of adult hunters mentoring males into hunting to 72.6 percent

while adults mentoring young women rises to 27.4 percent.

With 10.3 million big game hunters in the United States according to the 2006 National Survey of Hunting, Fishing and Wildlife Associated Recreation, it's no surprise HunterSurvey.com showed deer were the most popular game species pursued during a young person's first hunt.

Nearly 56 percent of youth deer hunted with an adult mentor on their first hunt, though the second most popular hunt was for small game with 40.7 percent participation. Upland hunting ranked third at 16.7 percent and wild turkey a distant fourth at 12.8 percent.

Those who hunt, fish and target shoot are invited to participate in www.huntersurvey.com and www.anglersurvey.com. By completing the survey, you will be entered in a monthly drawing for one of five \$100 gift certificates to the sporting goods retailer of your choice

"We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect."

From A Sand County Almanac by Aldo Leopold