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The South Dakota Wildlife Federation Conservation Camp received a check for \$3,500.00 from the Great Plains Outdoorsmen of Aberdeen. Presenting the check are back row left, Jerry Brown and back row right, Pat McHugh. Accepting the check left to right are Bob Schaeffer, Courtney Schaeffer, Joe Kienow, Brittany Schaeffer, James Kienow and Dan Opp.

SD pheasant boom headed for a bust?

Re-printed with permission from Korrie Wenzel, Mitchell Daily Republic

As a Pheasants Forever farm bill biologist stationed in his hometown of Mitchell, Mike Blaalid spends his days helping area landowners create conditions ideal for wildlife habitat. He logs countless hours in the field and sees how the landscape is rapidly changing.

Drain tile is being installed in rural fields. Wetlands are being burned away so they can be farmed. Rocky, erodible, native sod that's never been turned is being converted to cropland.

Blaalid says that from a wildlife habitat standpoint, South Dakota is becoming the next Iowa, and that's not a good thing.

"We're not headed in the right direction, I can tell you that," Blaalid said. "I hate to say it, but I truly believe we are headed for a worse place. It might be awhile until we get back in the right direction again."

Not unlike the Black Hills gold rush of the 1870s or the North Dakota oil boom of today, South Dakota has enjoyed a pheasant boom over the past two decades. There were approximately 2.1 million pheasants in the state in 1986, but the population jumped over the next 20 years due to changes in land management and a better understanding of wildlife's role in tourism.

The federal Conservation Reserve Program, which pays landowners to set aside marginal land, played a large role. Its original intent was to keep land from being mismanaged, but it was accompanied by an environmentally wonderful side effect: It created ideal habitat for wildlife in general, and pheasants in particular.

As the pheasant population grew, many landowners grasped the connection between birds and income. Aided by word-of-mouth marketing and national advertising campaigns, South Dakota became a destination, and the state cashed in. The South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks estimates that nonresident hunters spent approximately \$179 million in South Dakota in 2008 alone.

But history shows that oil booms and gold rushes fade, and Blaalid is worried South Dakota's pheasant boom is headed the same direction.

"Everybody in here either owns their own business or knows somebody who owns a business that is impacted by pheasant hunting," Blaalid said during a recent speech to the Mitchell Rotary Club. "So keep in mind how big a deal this is. If you take anything from this presentation, it should be this: It's pretty simple.

The less habitat we have for wildlife and pheasants, the less wildlife we're going to have, which means, potentially, we could lose our hunters. Our nonresident hunters are very important. If we lose that revenue, what happens? What happens to Mitchell businesses? A lot of us depend on that seasonal flush of nonresident hunters who come here and spend money."

Demise looming?

If Blaalid sounds like a doomsayer, Davison County's pheasant-related statistics do tend to point toward a looming cliff, both for the pheasant population and the fiscal health of the region's autumn tourism industry.

For instance:

* There were more than 1.55 million acres of CRP land in South Dakota in 2007. By 2010, South Dakota's CRP acres fell to 1.11 million acres. The acreage took a hit earlier this year, when another 117,000 acres came out of contract, dropping South Dakota's CRP total to about 980,000 acres. Between 2007 and today, South Dakota's amount of CRP land has dropped by approximately 579,000 acres. That comes to about 904 square miles, or a land mass 35 square miles larger than the combined size of Hanson and Davison counties.

* According to the state Department of Game, Fish and Parks, the pheasant population dropped from 11.9 million in 2007 to 6.6 million in 2011.

* Nonresident hunters spent approximately \$9.6 million in Davison County in 2008, according to the GF&P. In 2011, the number was \$6.6 million, down 31 percent.

* There were 66,175 pheasants harvested in Davison County in 2008, but by 2011, that number had steadily declined to 38,246 — a drop of 42 percent.



Farmers- need a tax deduction this year? Consider donating some grain or land to the SDWF.

You will get a tax break and your support of the SDWF will help protect the land and wildlife you love.

Crisis looms in pheasant country *Continued from Page 1*

* In 2007, there were 103,231 licensed nonresident pheasant hunters in South Dakota, but in 2011, the number fell to 95,077 — a drop of 8 percent.

* In Davison County, 4,348 nonresident pheasant hunters purchased licenses in 2007. In 2011, the number fell to 3,404 — down 22 percent.

* In 2007, the Mitchell airport reported 3,932 people arriving between October and December. In 2011, the number fell to 3,182 — down 19 percent.

* Meanwhile, the price of corn has risen exponentially, from \$3.22 on Oct. 1, 2007, to \$7.37 on Oct. 1 of this year — up 129 percent.

Blaalid said the similarities between Iowa's past and South Dakota's present are too real to deny.

In 2003, Iowa saw more than 140,000 hunters harvest more than 1 million pheasants. Those are respectable numbers and somewhat comparable to South Dakota's hunter numbers and average harvest the past decade. But earlier this month, Field and Stream magazine reported that "Iowa's pheasant numbers have been in free fall for the past five years due to cold, wet weather and habitat destruction prompted by high grain prices."

In 2011, Iowans harvested only about 109,000 pheasants — just 10 percent of the 2004 harvest and the lowest total since the state began annual estimates in 1962. For comparison, consider this: In 2011, hunters in South Dakota harvested 103,000 pheasants in Lyman County alone.

A report titled "Iowa's Pheasants," penned by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, also places at least some blame on habitat loss. From 1990 to 2005, Iowa lost 2,500 square miles of CRP land.

"Iowa doesn't have much pastureland left. It's all broken up," Blaalid said. "In the 1990s, Iowa was shooting way more birds than us. Can you imagine Mitchell going from the six-million-odd dollars we made (in Davison County nonresident hunter spending) to next to nothing?"

From 1997 to 2010, Iowa endured a sharp decrease in pheasant-related spending. According to the Iowa DNR, 205,204 pheasant hunters spent more than \$80 million in the state in 1997; in 2010, approximately 60,000 hunters spent \$24 million.

When shown the downward-trending statistics, Mitchell Convention and Visitors Bureau Director Jacki Miskimins said "it's not a trend I'm excited to see."

"I definitely want to keep my eye on it," she said. "Pheasant hunting is critical to Mitchell's economy. It's a huge boost after peak tourist season. ... If numbers continue to decline, we'll need to formulate a wide-ranging response."

Miskimins' office annually works to attract hunters. For example, Mitchell is represented with a booth at the annual national Pheasant Festival, scheduled for Feb. 15-17 in Minneapolis. Approximately 6,500 mailers are sent to Minnesota hunters each year, touting Mitchell as a hunting destination.

It's not all doom and gloom.

Summertime brood counts showed an 18 percent increase in the state's

pheasant population earlier this year.

Mike Scherschligt, manager of the Mitchell airport, said arrivals this year seem to be on par with years past, although he hasn't yet compiled seasonal totals.

And when The Daily Republic checked taxable sales in the Mitchell ZIP code's category of "sporting goods and bicycle shops," the newspaper found that sales have remained stable since 2008. In 2008, the reported taxable sales in that category came to \$28,710,011. In 2011, the number was \$29,710,135.

"So where are we headed?" Blaalid asked during subsequent interviews with The Daily Republic. "I don't have a crystal ball, unfortunately, but I am genuinely concerned that if we don't become more proactive instead of reactive, like Iowa is now, we could slowly become like Iowa."

Blaalid said it's tough to blame landowners, since farming "is a business, and you want to be profitable. They're making a lot of profits and I can't blame them."

But, he adds, "I think we need to start thinking big picture."

Not convinced

As executive director of the South Dakota Corn Growers Association, Lisa Richardson works out of a Sioux Falls office. Don't let her urban office location belie her staunch support of rural rights. Richardson is quick to counter any talk that blames landowners and farming practices for having a negative effect on the state's pheasants.

"Our population is growing," she said. "The world is hungry and the American farmer is adapting."

When a reporter called her office last week to ask questions about pheasants and farming, she let out an audible sigh and immediately produced numbers and statistics to make a case on behalf of South Dakota farmers. It's as if the data is kept in a nearby glass case, at the ready for such emergencies.

"The No. 1 thing that affects corn or pheasant production is Mother Nature," said Richardson, who as a youngster hunted with her father. "Pheasant numbers were up 18 percent in 2012 because last winter wasn't too bad and last spring wasn't too wet."

Richardson said there needs to be a "balancing act between feeding the world and recreation."

And she's not convinced farmers are as detrimental to pheasants as some believe.

She notes that in 1997, there were 3.6 million pheasants in the state and also that the number rose to 11.9 million in 2007, the highest number since the early 1960s. Although there was a dip down to 6.6 million in 2011, she notes that the number rose to an estimated 11 million again this year. And all this came as CRP numbers decline and corn acreage increases, she said.

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OTHER NAMES OF IMPORTANCE:



President,
Rich Widman

A Tale of Two Hunts President's Column *by Rich Widman*

It was the best of times; it was the worst of times.

After a depressing start to this hunting season, my brother and I were recently invited to hunt some land a friend acquired several years back. We were excited because, although my buddy said they weren't seeing a lot of birds there this year, we'd always had awesome hunts on his land—every time. We were not disappointed!

Terry has worked hard to make his land a little piece of hunting paradise, and it showed with 200 late-season, spooky birds exiting the tree belt as we were working it north. I got two birds with two shots. (Well, Jon claimed one. Whatever, Jon!)

Our next stop was the cattails, which held birds tight; we just needed to get to them and get them up. Now, as most of you hunters know, cattails make great cover but are tough to trudge through. I'm getting an oxygen tank for my brother for Christmas because he almost didn't make it!

As Terry and I were catching our breath, his dog pointed a bird right between us. It was under the snow and five-foot laid-over cattails. The dog kept going deeper under the cover until we could hardly see her, and finally, after four attempts to clear all the stalks, a rooster made his getaway attempt. Now you would think that that would have been an easy shot, but let's just say I let him live another day.

The four of us got our limit, and I got my much-needed pheasant fix. That was the best of times. Thank God I've got a friend who lets me hunt great land, because just a couple of weeks before that, I'd experienced the worst of times.

In the past, I've never gone hunting around Brookings without at the very least seeing some pheasants. I didn't always get my limit, but I usually got some shots and brought home a bird or two. Not this time. This Saturday I drove 90 miles, stopped at five different Walk-In or Game Production Areas, and walked close to four miles, but even on the drive to and from, I did not see ONE pheasant. Some of the cover wasn't that bad; it was just over-hunted. We definitely need more public lands in South Dakota to provide habitat for pheasants and hunting opportunities for sportsmen/women.

What I did see on that trip was plenty of plowed-up or burned CRP fields and wetlands, way too much drain tiling, and too many shelterbelts being torn out. This brings me to the South Dakota Corn Growers Association's recent press release, in which they claimed that conservation groups were blaming them, rather than the winters, for the pheasant population decrease, and argued that there was actually an increase in both corn and pheasants this year.

First, a 16% increase on an extremely low population still leaves an extremely low population. Second, a large number of the chicks that hatched this year died because of the heat and drought, so the numbers remained down. Third, what pheas-

Executive Director's Update *by Chris Hesla*

There are two types of lake beds in South Dakota. The first type is the meandered lake, all of which were surveyed when SD became a state. SD determined at that time that these lake beds and the covering water are owned by the people of SD. The second type is non-meandered lake. These lakes were not surveyed at statehood or have flooded in recent history and became a body of water. In many cases the flooded land is previously-farmed private land. The SD Supreme has ruled that non-meandered lake beds are owned by the property owner and the covering water is owned by the people. This makes for interesting private property and public access issues.

A bill will be introduced in this year's Legislative session, written and lobbied by hired guns, on behalf of a small group of landowners who want to privatize public water for their monetary gain. Although the bill is ponderous and at times conflicting, it is apparent the intent of the legislation is to overturn over 130 years of water law, legal precedent, and the Public Trust Doctrine to favor a few.

The following is water law in South Dakota as it now stands:

In 1877, the US Congress passed the Desert Land Act, under which the waters of Dakota Territory, "were reserved for the use of the public under the laws of the various arid-land states."

State law in 1909 said, "All the waters within the limits of the state from all sources of water supply belong to the public and, except as to navigable waters, are subject to appropriation for beneficial use." Landowner rights to appropriations were reserved by the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Dakota in 1881 for "mining, milling, agricultural or domestic purposes..."

In 1955, the SD Legislature reaffirmed that all water is public property.

In 2003, the SD Supreme Court stated, "...we conclude that all water in South Dakota belongs to the people in accord with the public trust doctrine and as declared by statute and precedent...The public trust doctrine imposes an obligation on the State to preserve water for public use."

Now comes 2013, and along with it a bill to completely reverse the

ants need most are shelterbelts and wetlands for cover in the winter and grasslands for nesting in the spring. But what have a lot of the corn growers been taking out, draining and plowing up?

My 95-year-old grandma said, "This is what the farmers did in the Thirties, and they'll be sorry! They haven't learned from Grandpa's lessons." I fear she's right, but we'll all be sorry. I've talked with some farmers who say the Dirty Thirties will never happen again, but watching Ken Burns' *The Dust Bowl*, I'm not so sure. That program should be required viewing for this generation of farmers and sportsmen.

We've all seen and heard the ads, but I wanted to educate myself on who and what the Corn Growers consider to be the True Environmentalists. So I went to their website and found some really good information and videos of farmers talking about their conservation efforts.

They spoke about how we needed to pass the land on to the next generations in better condition than when we got it. They talked about how the shelterbelts provide cover for both cattle and wildlife, how planting buffer strips prevents erosion and captures pollutants, and how you don't have to farm fenceline to fenceline, along with other wildlife- and people-friendly ways to care for the land.

I applaud their ideals and wish all farmers would listen and follow their guidelines to care for our water, soil, wildlife and air. They're talking about a lot of the same things that all the conservation groups say need to be done to protect our land. The problem is, those guidelines are not being followed by enough people. I fear there is more talk than action. Talk is cheap: a True Environmentalist pays as much attention to treating the land properly as to increasing the bottom line.

A friend of mine recently lamented, "Have you ever noticed how some people don't care and don't want to get involved with something unless it affects them or their families today? However, when that something becomes a huge problem that affects them, it's way too late to correct it."

That's true, and that's where you and your SDWF membership come in. SDWF is addressing issues today so they don't become problems that affect us all later. By the time you get this, the Legislature will be in session, and SDWF will be hard at work. Over the years, many bad bills have been successfully defeated. I don't think people realize how different hunting and fishing in South Dakota would be if SDWF had not been around to defeat those bad bills.

I will say it again and again. Ask "JUST ONE" buddy to join and please donate to the Legacy Fund, the Legal Fund, and the Camo Coalition to make sure SDWF will always be around to protect what we all love—our wildlife and our wilderness and our outdoor heritage.

work our ancestors went through to ensure the rights of our citizens to protect and use the public resources they own. The admonition by the Supreme Court and the Public Trust Doctrine to preserve all water for the public benefit appears nowhere in the bill—neither in words nor in philosophy.

I find it ironic that when more preserves, more non-resident licenses, the expansion of commercialization of wildlife, or restricting the public's access to their resources is proposed, it is touted 'economic development' and its advocates say we need this economic development to 'ensure our future'. Too few consider the true impact of these expansions on sustainability of our natural resources.

This is an issue that could impact and completely change the tradition of access onto the public's water here in South Dakota. Not only for fishing but hunting, wading, bird watching, or just floating on an old inner tube enjoying the sun.

The few landowners who originated this new bill have an agenda to stop free access. They want to be paid for access onto flooded water over private land. We are talking about a lot of water that is now open for recreation here in SD. The SDWF Camo-Coalition and lobbyists are actively working and will continue to inform our policymakers of the repercussions of this bill. We welcome your help.

The SDWF Camo-Coalition is the only non-governmental organization fighting to keep SD water public and accessible. We need everyone to join and refer others to the SDWF Camo-Coalition at www.sdwfcamo.net. The Free membership includes our daily Legislative newsletter.

And please support the South Dakota Wildlife Federation by supporting its Just One More membership drive at www.sdwf.org/membership.html. If each current member brings in 1 new member, we'll greatly impact our ability to protect our hunting and fishing heritage.

WE CAN and DO MAKE a DIFFERENCE!



Executive Director
Chris Hesla

Crisis looms in pheasant country *Continued from Page 1,2*

“During the past decade, when our corn numbers rose dramatically, our pheasant numbers were the highest they have been in 40 years,” she said.

Corn farmers take the blame when in reality it’s more likely just a natural cycle, she said.

“The thing that’s going to stink is this: We are having CRP numbers coming out. Let’s say we have a terrible winter, with no cover and no food. They will die, OK? And then we have a super-wet spring and the hatches won’t work. Regardless, Mother Nature plays a role in all this, just as she does with the corn crop.”

Richardson acknowledges that more marginal land is being used for crops, but says greed isn’t behind it. She said CRP acres are coming out of contract because technology has created corn seed that now will grow in formerly marginal areas. Drought-resistant seeds are being unveiled, and that means the corn range will continue to head farther into western South Dakota, driving up acreage numbers even more.

Meanwhile, some climate experts claim that climate change is prompting an expansion of corn country. Kansas farmers are harvesting fewer and fewer corn acres while corn production in Manitoba has doubled over the past decade.

Earlier this year, The Daily Republic published a Bloomberg News report that quoted John Soper, vice president of crop genetics research for Pioneer, as saying that corn-growing regions likely will continue to move northward while alternative grains will take corn’s place elsewhere.

‘Plow, baby, plow’

Lyle Perman, of Lowry, has a unique perspective on South Dakota’s emerging agricultural landscape. He is a rancher and the outgoing chairman of the South Dakota Grassland Coalition. He raises cows, grooms lands for his pheasant hunting business and sells farmland insurance.

As he spoke to a reporter earlier this week, he looked out the window of his shop and watched pheasants frolic on his ranch, which is located between Pierre and Mobridge.

Perman said the issue is that landowners simply are seeking the best bottom line, and he doesn’t blame them.

“It’s all about habitat and economics. Where can I get the most return?” he said. “Pheasants and wildlife are not the best return. ... CRP rental rates are not keeping up with cash rental rates.”

CRP contracts last from 10 to 15 years. Landowners who sign them promise to not farm those acres, for which they are paid by the federal government — sometimes between \$100 and \$150 per acre, depending on the type of program and location of the land.

Perman’s CRP land in the rough country south of Mobridge doesn’t bring that much money. He has a CRP contract that pays him \$63 per acre, but he says he could easily double that if he simply rented the land. If he rented the land, he wouldn’t have to deal with the constant hassle of controlling noxious weeds on those acres.

Also, insurance guarantees have risen exponentially in recent years, Perman said, and many landowners feel they have nothing to lose by putting crops on former CRP land.

A report earlier this year, compiled by the Minnesota Environmental Partnership, outlined how rising insurance guarantees are contributing to the growing number of acres being used for row crops. The report noted a particular farmer who was guaranteed \$166 per acre in 1997, yet saw that number rise to approximately \$900 in 2011.

“Show me a CRP contract that is expiring and isn’t being converted to cropland and I’ll show you nine that are,” Perman said. “CRP rental rates are not keeping up with cash rental rates and the other part of it right now is in our current farming situation, with crop insurance. ... As long as people are not discouraged — due to crop insurance — to convert CRP, they’re going to do it.”

It’s hard to track how many acres of grassland — not just CRP, but actual acres of grass — have recently been tilled in South Dakota, Perman said. He suggests using state statistics on cattle instead.

According to the National Agriculture Statistics Service, there were 1.8 million beef cattle in South Dakota in 2001; today, there are about 1.6 million. Perman said the drop of about 200,000 animals is a good indicator that grassland has correspondingly been converted to other purposes.

Perman, who will speak in Mitchell at a Pheasants Forever event Feb. 10, asks landowners to take a “holistic” approach in their decision-making.

“In the end, on our ranch, we look at it from an ethical standpoint. We say that, yes, there is some land that could grow corn, but maybe we should leave it in grass because from an environmental standpoint, that makes sense,” he said. “That is being lost by some decision-makers. It’s ‘plow, baby, plow’ while we can.”

Meanwhile, he cautions that to simply stop growing row crops could be harmful to the state’s economy in several ways.

Perman reminds that implement dealers make their money by selling the tools and machines that turn the soil. That revenue then circulates through South Dakota’s rural communities. Seed dealers and fertilizer salespeople are important to the state’s economy, too.

And, he asks, “if we have to feed 9 billion people by 2050, how are we going to do it if we don’t convert and plow up CRP?”

A solution?

To find a solution would first require that all sides agree on whether a problem exists in the first place.

Blaalid, the wildlife biologist, says wildlife woes are on the horizon if things don’t change.

Richardson, of the South Dakota Corn Growers, says corn farmers aren’t necessarily to blame for decreasing pheasant numbers. She also says there isn’t enough proof that bird numbers are truly in decline.

And Perman, the insurance agent and rancher from Lowry, said many factors are in play as the state’s agricultural landscape changes.

Perman said a problem going forward will be that “government can’t compete” with the economic realities of today’s agriculture.

“It’s a money issue. Farmers would keep land in CRP if rates were competitive,” he said. “I wish there was some way that when the contracts expire, that they could figure out a way to encourage people to keep that land in grass. But there just isn’t.”

“Until the government provides an equal incentive for raising grass as it does for breaking it to raise other crops, (CRP and grassland) acres will continue to decline.”

Blaalid said any solution will require a “cooperative effort.”

It would help, Blaalid said, if Congress would be more aggressive and pass a new farm bill. The delay is only creating more uncertainty, he said.

He also would like to see conservation compliance promoted through legislation. Blaalid said that in the 1990s, the government unlinked conservation measures and insurance, meaning landowners could receive insurance payments without basic soil conservation practices being in use.

In the meantime, Blaalid is just grateful for opportunities to tell people that the industry he cherishes is, in his opinion, in trouble.

“I just think a lot of people don’t realize this is happening,” he said. “I don’t think it hurts as much when it’s gradual, but

“The purpose of conservation: The greatest good to the greatest number of people for the longest time.” Gifford Pinchot

Last minute fiscal cliff deal

The last minute fiscal cliff deal includes an extension of the Farm Bill, which had officially expired at the end of September. Here is a rundown of the basics of what is included in this extension. Please note that this is still an initial analysis, as we are still trying to understand all of the details:

* Overall: Farm bill programs are extended for 9 months (until September 30, 2013). This includes an extension of direct payments as well as \$160 million for disaster assistance. Additionally, the bill includes an extension of dairy policy, which means that the so called "dairy cliff" is avoided.

* Conservation programs: Conservation programs are extended, so there can be new sign-ups for programs like the Conservation Reserve Program, the Grassland Reserve Program, and the Wetland Reserve Program. However, due to a budget problem that was not corrected in this extension, there will be no new sign-ups for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). CSP is one of the largest conservation programs in the farm bill. By not including a budget fix for this program, farmers will not be able to enroll new acres in this important conservation program over the next 9 months. Additionally, the extension does not include any mandatory funding for the Voluntary Public Access Program, although \$10 million is authorized for appropriations.

* Energy programs: No mandatory funding is included for energy title programs such as the Biomass Crop Assistance Program and the Rural Energy for America Program. These valuable and popular programs are needed to improve energy efficiency and deployment of alternative energy on farms as well as to advance bioenergy technologies and biomass supply for the next generation of biomass based heat, power, fuels and bio based products.

* Grasslands at risk: The bill does not include a sodsaver provision as part of the extension. This means that over the next nine months, thousands more of our remaining grassland acres are at risk to be converted due to high commodity prices combined with incentives for breaking out new land.



Farm Bill Extension Falls Short

Cutting, delaying key conservation programs puts native grasslands and other vital habitat at risk

Washington, DC (January 2, 2013) – After failing to pass a five year Farm Bill this past year, Congress has extended the 2008 Farm Bill for nine months as part of the fiscal crisis deal. In addition to preventing new farmers from enrolling in the Conservation Stewardship Program, the extension lacks funding for critical renewable energy programs and delays the implementation of sodsaver, a policy that would reduce federal subsidies for farmers who convert native grassland into cropland.

Julie Sibbing, Director of Agriculture and Forestry Programs for the National Wildlife Federation, had this to say in response:

"It is disappointing that Congress was unable to pass a five year Farm Bill in time. Passing a nine month extension delays much needed reforms and cuts a key incentive program for farmers wanting to implement conservation measures on their land. America's farmers, taxpayers and wildlife deserve more than this Band-Aid fix.

"By delaying the implementation of sodsaver, Congress is allowing thousands more grassland acres to be converted for short term gain, destroying vital habitat for grassland birds and other wildlife.

"We hope the new Congress is able to come together later this year to pass a Farm Bill that meets the needs of farmers, is fair to all taxpayers, and provides protections for soil, water, wildlife and habitat for the benefit of all Americans."

Playing Chicken in Oil-Patch Politics Wall Street Journal

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recently announced that it will formally consider listing the Lesser Prairie Chicken—whose habitat includes some of the nation's major energy fields—as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. This clearly is another desperate ploy by the Obama administration to further its campaign against oil and gas drilling. Such egregious overreach has been a specialty of the Environmental Protection Agency in the past. The administration has now found another agency to do its bidding.

The Lesser Prairie Chicken is a ground-nesting bird native to portions of Texas, Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico and Oklahoma. In Texas, it is found primarily in the Texas Panhandle and the Permian Basin. Listing the bird as threatened or endangered would make drilling all but impossible in these economically thriving regions. The Permian Basin alone produces more than one million barrels of oil a day, accounting for almost 70% of Texas' total production and 20% of the nation's oil production. It also supports thousands of jobs and provides millions of dollars in state revenue.

Several groups, including the Panhandle Producers and Royalty Owners Association and the Permian Basin Petroleum Association, have drafted something called a "Candidate Conservation Agreement With Assurances" in the hope that Fish and Wildlife will approve the plan and forgo listing the bird. The agreement describes oil and gas companies' involvement in habitat-conservation efforts and ideally will be merged with similar documents being developed in other states. Operators who choose not to participate in the voluntary conservation process will be held responsible for any reduction in wildlife or habitat and could be subject to penalties or even jail.

The Lesser Prairie Chicken matter isn't the first time the federal government has tried to use the Endangered Species Act as a tool in the war on drilling. Not that it is always successful. This summer, after months of research, Fish and Wildlife conceded that listing the Dunes Sagebrush Lizard as threatened or endangered wasn't warranted. The agency reviewed some 800 written

comments and 147 comments from individuals or organizations at a two-day public hearing. Only 30 supported listing the lizard.

As it happens, the habitat of the Lesser Prairie Chicken largely overlaps that of the Dunes Sagebrush Lizard. Since Texas was able to produce a plan for the lizard that would work for environmentalists and operators alike, there is reason to hope that a similar plan being drafted for the Lesser Prairie Chicken will work.

Yet another issue of concern is the funding behind these efforts to list certain animals as endangered. Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson testified to Congress in June that taxpayer money is being spent in litigation over these listings. For instance, the petition to list the Dunes Sagebrush Lizard was originally filed by a radical environmental group, the Wild Earth Guardians. Interestingly, this group collected \$680,492 in tax money (as grants and the like) from Fish and Wildlife between 2007 and 2011. During that time the group sued the federal agency 76 times over alleged environmental violations.

The Wild Earth Guardians are also behind the petition to list the Spot-Tailed Earless Lizard under the Endangered Species Act. Not coincidentally, the range of this particular lizard includes portions of the Eagle Ford Shale in Texas, which is emerging as one of the top oil- and gas-producing regions in the country. Production in the nine-field formation is steadily increasing, reporting 310,370 barrels of oil a day in July of this year, compared with 120,532 barrels a day in July 2011.

By filing an outlandish number of lawsuits, groups like the Wild Earth Guardians are trying to overwhelm Fish and Wildlife resources and force settlements that the groups can dictate, instead of letting the courts decide. Such groups are willing to use extreme tactics to pursue their goal of shutting down the oil and gas industry with blatant disregard to how their actions will affect the economy or the power supply on which we all depend.

If a man walks in the woods for love of them half of each day, he is in danger of being regarded as a loafer. But if he spends his days as a speculator, shearing off those woods and making the earth bald before her time, he is deemed an industrious and enterprising citizen. Henry David Thoreau, author of "Walden," 1817-1862

SD Wildlife Federation Donors

At the 2003 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. These tax-deductible contributions will speak volumes for the future of the SDWF's Wildlife Legacy Council! Please consider your donation today. Donations can be sent to SDWF, PO Box 7075, Pierre, SD 57501.

The Legacy Council consists of five different donation levels. These donation levels were revised October 2011 to: Level V Eagle \$1,000 & above; Level IV Buffalo \$501 - \$999; Level III Elk \$301 - \$500; Level II Deer \$201 - \$300; and Level I Pheasant \$100 - \$200.

December 2012

LEVEL IV BUFFALO OLSON, JEFF - SD SCALET, CHUCK & GINGER - SD	LEVEL II DEER GILBERT, JIM - CA LEVEL I PHEASANT BLACKBURN, JOHN - SD	DRAKE, ROBERT - SD FORMAN, KURT - SD FOXWORTHY, ROBERT - KY FRYBARGER, JIM - NM FUERST, KEVIN - SD HEEDUM, ROGER - NE HEPPER, GREGORY - SD JOHNSON, LYNN E. - SD	KALLEMEYN, LARRY - SD KING, T. CLEVE - MI KRODINGER, LAWRENCE - MO MILLER, O. LARRY - SD MILLER, RICHARD - SD MUNDON, KENT - SD PARCEL, KERRY - SD PETERS, DUANE - SD	PICEK, LARRY - SD PORISCH, ROBERT - MN RILEY, MIKE - MO SATTTLER, ARNOLD - SD STANFORTH, WINFIELD - CO
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November 2012

LEVEL III ELK BARRETT, DENNES - SD TOSCANA, VIC - SD	LEVEL I PHEASANT COOPER, JOHN - SD GREENWOOD, KEN - OK MADDOX, ALEX - TN	MCMASTERS, LEIGH - SD OLSON, MURDEAN - SD PAUL, K-LYNN, AZ SORNA, MICHAEL - TX	WALKER, JIM - ID WISWALL, F. HERBERT - SD ZOELLNER, KENNETH - CA
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October 2012

There were no legacy donors this month.

September 2012

LEVEL II DEER HALLSTROM, KEN - SD STAMMER, MARLIN - CA	LEVEL I PHEASANT BUCKNER, EVERETT - AR BUCKNER II, WILLIAM - AR	GREGORY, J.T. - GA KERN, LARRY - MN SCHMID, JOHN - CO
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August 2012

LEVEL V EAGLE CHAPMAN, JOHN W. - PA LEVEL II DEER LEMONDS, JIM - SD	LEVEL I PHEASANT ADAMS, MEL - TN AYLER, JOHN - KS CASLER, DAVID - MO CHRISTOPHERSON, M.E. - SC	DILLON, JOHN - UT JOHNSON, DARRELL - SD MESSERSCHMIDT, LOYAL - SD OCHOCKI, ROBERT - CA RAINEY, TIMOTHY - MN	SCHERSCHLIGHT, JEFFRY - SD VAA, SPENCER - SD WILDMAN, DENNY - OH
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July 2012

LEVEL IV BUFFALO WORDEN, JAMES - CA LEVEL III ELK CARLSON, HENRY - SD STEINBERG, ROGER - MN LEVEL II DEER BERRY, CHUCK - SD POPOWSKI, JOHN - SD	LEVEL I PHEASANT ANDERSON, EDDIE - TN BEALKA, ROBERT - WI BRAKEBUSH, CARL - WI DENNIS, JACK - NV GEBHART, RONALD - AK GRIFFIN, JOHN - OK HEFFRON, GEORGE H. - CO HUBER, DANIEL - SC	JONES, DONALD - CO LUTZ, BOB - MT MCGUIRE, ARVID - WI PAXTON, GARY - OK RITER, JR., ROBERT - SD SAMPSON, TERRY - SD SCHEURENBRAND, BRUCE - CA SCHLUTER, BOB - MN SEELEY, GARY - KS	SIMON, DARREL - SD SWORDS, L.F. - MS WARE, WILLIAM - MS WELCH, HARVEY - IL WHEELER, STEPHEN J. - SD WORSHAM, JERRY - WA
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June 2012

There were no legacy donors this month.

May 2012

LEVEL V EAGLE Nat'l Wild Turkey Federation - SD LEVEL IV BUFFALO LEE, KARL O. - SD LEVEL II DEER FENSTRA, HARRY - MN	JOHNSON, ERIC - MN STADTFELD, CRAIG - SD LEVEL I PHEASANT BAKER, FRED - OH FLINT, FORREST - MN HANSEN, VIRGIL - SD	KEELER, CHARLES - MN KOUTSKY, JOHN - IL LINDNER, RONALD - SD LIPPINCOTT, ROB - TX MATSUKAGE, FAY - CO SCHUPP, TERRY - AZ	TESCH, CURT - SD WALKER, GALE - SD WINTER BROS UNDERGROUND - SD ZOELLNER, KENNETH - CA
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April 2012

LEVEL IV BUFFALO THE SPORTSMAN'S CLUB OF BROWN CO. - SD	LEVEL II DEER O'REILLY, LARRY - MO LEVEL I PHEASANT CONNELL, CRAIG - SD	ECKERT, DENIS - SD HIX, DOUGLAS - ID KIEFT, LARRY - MI MAYES, TERRY & LA REE - SD	PAHL, CHARLES - SD
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March 2012

LEVEL V EAGLE BEADLE CO. SPORTSMEN - SD BLACK HILLS SPORTSMEN - SD DAKOTA SPORTSMEN, INC. - SD HIGH PLAINS WILDLIFE FEDERATION - SD LEVEL III ELK BROOKINGS WILDLIFE FEDERATION - SD HAATVEDT, CY - SD HECLA SPORTSMAN CLUB - SD	SD WALLEYE UNLIMITED - SD LEVEL II DEER 29-90 SPORTSMAN'S CLUB - SD BIG SIOUX CHAPTER OF ROCKY MOUNTAIN ELK FOUND. - SD DIETER, CHARLES - SD PEDERSON, TIM - SD PHEASANTS FOREVER YANKTON CHAPTER - SD LEVEL I PHEASANT AKKERMAN, STEPHEN - MN	BAGAU, TERRY - MN BROWN, ALLEN B. - SD CHALUS, DENNIS - CO CRISSMAN, EARLE - SD DAHLBERG, JIM - SD DENISON, LARRY - VA ELBE, ROBERT - WI EVANS, RALPH - FL GOEDE, DAN - SD GRASS LAKES CONSERVATION CLUB - SD HOFTIEZER, GREG - SD	JACKSON, WARREN - SD JUNGERS, ROMAN - WI KRETCHMAN, JIM - SD MADLAND, JON - SD NORDBY, DAVID O. - CA SATHER, DUANE - SD TOBIN, THOMAS - SD WHETSTONE SPORTSMAN CONSERVATION CLUB - SD WICKSTROM, GERALD - SD
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February 2012

LEVEL III ELK STAMMER, MARLIN - CA	LEVEL I PHEASANT ANDRESEN, RICH - SD BORMANN, DANIEL - WI	DIVICH, DUANE - TX NEISSL, E.J. - AR RUMPCA, HAL - SD	SIMPSON, JOHN - SD WIDMAN, MARK - SD
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January 2012

LEVEL V EAGLE OLSON, JEFF - SD LEVEL III ELK MCCARTHY, STEVE - SD	LEVEL II DEER BRICK, RICHARD - CA MARTIN, JIM - SD MCCLELLAN, JR., DR. HERBERT - SD	SCHROEDER, JR., KENNETH - SD LEVEL I PHEASANT GOODMAN, RICHARD - OH KASISCHKE, CARL - MI	LEWIS, HOWARD - CA MCCARLSON, PAUL - SD PESEK, RON - SD WIDMAN, RICH - SD
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"JUST ONE"

New Member Program

The SDWF has approximately 3,000 members. We are constantly fighting to keep our outdoor heritage and to conserve our natural resources. We can't continue without our members and we can't keep fighting unless we grow our membership.

Encourage your friends that enjoy the outdoors to join the SDWF directly or through a local affiliate club. "JUST ONE" new member can make a world of difference!



Love the outdoors and need a tax deduction this year?
If you have a car, van, truck, ATV, or boat that's in reasonably good shape and you aren't using, donate it to the SDWF. You'll get a nice tax break and will feel great knowing you helped our great organization protect South Dakota's outdoors.



888-OVERBAG

SDWF Membership Application

To continue our conservation efforts - we need your help! Please donate generously.

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
 Phone: _____
 e-mail: _____
 SDWF \$20/Yr Membership Fee \$ _____
 SDWFCamo-Coalition lobbying donation: \$ _____

Send Donation and
 Membership Application to:
 SDWF
 P.O Box 7075
 Pierre, SD 57501-0952



CC _____ EXP _____ CV _____
 Check - make checks payable to SDWF

Drought revives old water war among river states

The water wars are raging again in America's heartland, where drought-stricken states are pleading for the increasingly scarce water of the Missouri River — to drink from their faucets, irrigate their crops and float the barges that carry billions of dollars of agricultural products to market.

From Montana to West Virginia, officials on both sides have written President Barack Obama urging him to intervene — or not — in a long-running dispute over whether water from the Missouri's upstream reservoirs should be released into the Mississippi River to ease low water levels that have imperiled commercial traffic.

The quarrel pits boaters, fishermen and tourism interests against communities downstream and companies that rely on the Mississippi to do business.

"We are back to the age-old old battle of recreation and irrigation verses navigation," said Sen. Claire McCaskill, a Democrat from Missouri.

If the water is held back, downstream states warn that shipping on the Mississippi could come to a near standstill sometime after Christmas along a 180-mile stretch between St. Louis and the southern Illinois town of Cairo. But if the water is released, upstream communities worry that the toll of the drought could be even worse next year for farms and towns that depend on the Missouri.

Obama has not decided whether to enter the dispute, nor has the White House set a timetable to respond. But tensions are rising in this decades-old battle.

From his perch as executive director of the Southeast Missouri Regional Port Authority, Dan Overbey watched this week as workers scrambled to ship out as much grain as possible before the Mississippi gets so low that it is not economically feasible or physically possible to move loaded-down barges.

"I don't know if we'll have, 'How the Grinch Stole the River' here," Overbey said. But if there is water to spare, "it would be a good thing to do."

More than 800 miles to the northwest, Michael Dwyer was also stewing. He is the executive vice president of the North Dakota Water Users Association. To Dwyer, the downriver interests are "taking selfishness" to "a level you can't even comprehend."

"We suffered the impact of these reservoirs" when they were created decades ago by dams that flooded 500,000 acres of bottomland, Dwyer said.

"To have some use of the resource only seems appropriate."

At the Mississippi River port near Cape Girardeau, Mo., about a million tons of cargo is loaded or unloaded annually, providing about 200 jobs, Overbey said.

The water is also vital in parts of the Dakotas, where the dammed-up Missouri River has spawned a tourism industry centered on boating and fishing. Todd Martell serves as a guide for walleye fishing in the summer and also runs an upholstery business in Pierre, S.D., that makes custom boat covers and interior furnishings. Lower water levels don't necessarily hurt the fishing but can leave certain boat ramps high and dry, he said.

Over the past three decades, more than a dozen lawsuits have been filed challenging the management of the river, many of which set Missouri and other downstream states against the Dakotas and other upstream states. The battles started in 1982, when Missouri, Iowa and Nebraska challenged a government contract allowing water to be drawn from the Missouri River in South Dakota to flush coal through a pipeline to power plants in the southeast.

The U.S. Supreme Court blocked the project, but other lawsuits followed, including an effort by upstream states to reduce the water released from dams in an attempt to boost sport fishing in the reservoirs.

Missouri, meanwhile, sued the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers when it held back water because of droughts and shortened the navigation season. Environmental groups also joined the court battles, advocating for spring surges and summer declines in downstream river levels to help threatened species of birds and fish.

So far, no lawsuits have been filed in the current competition for water. But battle lines have been drawn.

In May, North Dakota Sen. John Hoeven teamed up with Sen. Roy Blunt of Missouri to tour dams and levees along the Missouri River a year after devastating floods in 2011. The Republicans stressed their desire to work together to improve flood control and river management.

Now, they are on opposing sides.

"There are times when they need to get rid of water, and we need to appreciate what we have to do about that," Blunt said. "And there are times when we need water, and they need to appreciate the fact that we need that water, even though they'd rather not get rid of it."

Conservation camp enters 50th year

Re-printed with permission from the Argus Leader, written by John Pollmann, Sioux Falls Argus Leader

Save for the chatter of chickadees, the snowy stands of pine trees that surround Camp Bob Marshall near Custer State Park are likely pretty quiet today.

But come the first week of June, these 78 acres in the heart of the Black Hills will be bustling with the youthful energy of the South Dakota Wildlife Federation's Conservation Camp, much like they have for the past 50 years.

Camp director Mike McKernan hopes to see more than 100 boys and girls attend the camp from June 2-8, where students learn about a variety of outdoor topics including shooting sports, stream ecology and wildlife photography. McKernan believes that the broad selection of hands-on experiences has helped keep the conservation camp thriving for half a century.

"When the camp first began, it included a lot of presentations and talks from people who worked in conservation where kids would basically just sit and listen, but about 15 years ago we could see that we needed to make a change," says McKernan.

"You know, being able to spend a day with a mountain lion biologist or hiking through Custer State Park is more enjoyable than hearing about it. They sit enough the rest of the year."

There were 63 campers — all boys — at that first camp in June of 1964, McKernan says, and girls first started attending during the 1970s.

Today, McKernan says any child in grades 9-11 is eligible to attend the camp, and up to 120 applications will be ac-

cepted starting this month through March 1.

Camp applications are available through soil conservation districts across the state or through a local sportsman's club, like the 29-90 Sportsman's Club in Sioux Falls. McKernan also hopes to have a camp application available online at the South Dakota Wildlife Federation's homepage (sdwf.org) sometime next week.

The cost for the camp is \$300, which includes meals, lodging and activities for the week, as well as transportation to and from Camp Bob Marshall.

Campers are housed in traditional cabins with modern bathroom and eating facilities.

The Black Hills serve as the perfect backdrop for programs designed to educate youth on outdoor activities, McKernan says, and it's an experience that has had long-term implications for many who have attended.

"A good number of our counselors — including adults — are former campers who wanted to come back and help. There are always more people interested in serving as a counselor than there are spots to fill," says McKernan. "And these are all volunteer positions, too, so I think that says a lot about what this camp means to those who take part in it."

No outdoor experience is necessary to attend as a camper.

"There are a number of these kids who come to camp who have never hunted or put a worm on a hook before," says McKernan. "But that's what this camp is all about — get kids involved in the outdoors or keep them interested in the outdoors and keep the spirit of conservation alive for another generation."

"Congress is allowing thousands more grassland acres to be converted for short term gain

U.S. Hunting, Fishing and Watching Wildlife Up 3 Percent

Washington, D.C. - More than 90 million U.S. residents age 16 and older participated in some form of wildlife-related recreation in 2011, up 3 percent from five years earlier, according to a U.S. Census Bureau report.

These findings come from the final national report with results from the 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation released today by the Census Bureau on behalf of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

Conducted since 1955, the survey is one of the oldest continuing and most comprehensive recreation surveys in the U.S., collecting information on the number of anglers, hunters and wildlife watchers, as well as how often they participate in wildlife-related recreation and how much they spend on these activities.

According to the survey, wildlife recreationists spent \$70.4 billion on equipment, \$49.5 billion on travel and \$24.8 billion on other items, such as licenses and land leasing and ownership.

The number of people who hunted, fished or both rose from 33.9 million in 2006 to 37.4 million in 2011, with 33.1 million people fishing and 13.7 million hunting. The survey showed that 71.8 million people participated in at least one type of wildlife-watching activity, such as observing, feeding and photographing wildlife.



Fishing and Hunting Highlights

Of the 33.1 million people who fished, 27.5 million fished in freshwater and 8.9 million in saltwater.

The most popular fish sought by freshwater anglers, excluding Great Lakes fishing, were black bass (10.6 million anglers) and panfish (7.3 million anglers). The most popular fish sought by Great Lakes anglers were walleye and sauger (584,000 anglers) and black bass (559,000 anglers).

About 1.9 million people ice-fished and 4.3 million fly-fished.

Anglers spent \$41.8 billion on fishing trips, equipment and other items in 2011 — an average of \$1,262 per angler.

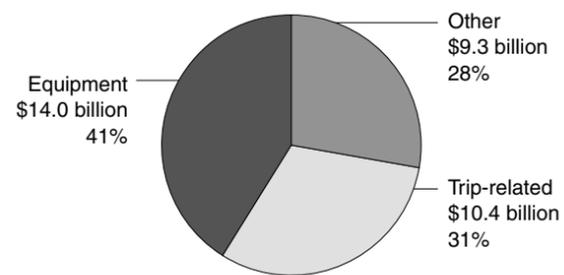
Of the 13.7 million hunters that took to the field in 2011, 11.6 million hunted big game, 4.5 million hunted small game, 2.6 million hunted migratory birds and 2.2 million hunted other animals.

Ninety-three percent of hunters used a shotgun, rifle or other similar firearm; 33 percent used a bow and arrow; and 22 percent used a muzzle-loader.

Nearly all hunters (approximately 94 percent) hunted in the state where they lived, while 14 percent hunted in other states.

Hunters spent \$33.7 billion on hunting trips, equipment and other items in 2011 — an average of \$2,465 per hunter.

Percent of Total Hunting Expenditures
(Total expenditures: \$33.7 billion)



Wildlife Watching Highlights

About 71.8 million U.S. residents observed, fed and/or photographed birds and other wildlife in 2011. Almost 68.6 million people watched wildlife around their homes, and 22.5 million people took trips of at least one mile from home to primarily watch wildlife.

Of the 46.7 million people who observed wild birds, 88 percent did so around their homes and 38 percent on trips of a mile or more from home.

People spent \$54.9 billion on their wildlife-watching trips, equipment and other items in 2011 — an average of \$981 per spender.

State reports with detailed information on participation and expenditures will be released on a flow basis beginning in January 2013.

Cutting, delaying key conservation programs puts native grasslands and other vital habitat at risk

Washington, DC (January 2, 2013) – After failing to pass a five year Farm Bill this past year, Congress has extended the 2008 Farm Bill for nine months as part of the fiscal crisis deal. In addition to preventing new farmers from enrolling in the Conservation Stewardship Program, the extension lacks funding for critical renewable energy programs and delays the implementation of sodbuster, a policy that would reduce federal subsidies for farmers who convert native grassland into cropland.

Julie Sibbing, Director of Agriculture and Forestry Programs for the National Wildlife Federation, had this to say in response:

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“By delaying the implementation of sodbuster, Congress is allowing thousands more grassland acres to be converted for short term gain, destroying vital habitat for grassland birds and other wildlife.

“We hope the new Congress is able to come together later this year to pass a Farm Bill that meets the needs of farmers, is fair to all taxpayers, and provides protections for soil, water, wildlife and habitat for the benefit of all Americans.”

“...In those days, we had never heard of passing up a chance to kill a wolf. In a second we were pumping lead into the pack, but with more excitement than accuracy... When our rifles were empty, the old wolf was down, and a pup was dragging a leg into impassible side rocks. We reached the old wolf in time to watch a fierce green fire dying in her eyes. I realized then, and have known ever since, that there was something new to me in those eyes-something known only to her and to the mountain. I was young then, and full of trigger-itch; I thought that because fewer wolves meant more deer, that no wolves would mean hunter’s paradise. But after seeing the green fire die, I sensed that neither the wolf nor the mountain agreed with such a view... From A Sand County Almanac by Aldo Leopold

Sportsmen/women- Want to help fund SDWF and the Youth Conservation Camp plus reduce your taxes this year? Donate stocks and land to the SDWF. You not only won't have to pay taxes on those assets, you will pay less tax because of your generosity!