Inside this issue:

Page 2  DES MOINES WATER CONSERVATION CONTINUED

Page 3  PRESIDENT'S COLUMN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

Page 4 - 5  EAST COAST LAND TRANSFER MOVEMENT
TRAIL CAMERA PUBLIC LANDS
Duck & Goose Season finalized
ANGLERS NEW REGULATIONS

Page 6  TERMINALLY ILL HUNTING

Page 7  SUSTAINABLE GARDENS

Page 8  GFP LANDOWNER WORKSHOP SUCCESS

DES MOINES CASE HAS ‘CHANGED THE CONVERSATION’ ON WATER

Re-printed with permission from Des Moines Register

In Iowa, a lawsuit by the Des Moines Water Works (DMWW) is forcing the state to confront the question of whether agriculture should be held accountable for nitrates that leach into urban drinking water. DMWW says the answer is yes. But instead of going after individual farms, the utility has sued three county drainage districts, arguing that they need to either push farmers to pollute less or install better filtering equipment to safeguard the water released into the Raccoon River, which provides drinking water for Des Moines’ 500,000 residents.

DMWW currently spends $1 million a year to remove nitrates from the city’s water. With nitrate levels reaching record highs, the utility says it will soon be forced to invest at least $100 million to upgrade equipment and raise customer fees by an estimated 10 percent. Backed by the Iowa Farm Bureau, the drainage districts counter that they don’t have the authority to police farm pollution. DMWW’s critics say that farmers should be encouraged to reduce nitrogen runoff through voluntary programs, not regulations.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack recently sided with those calling for voluntary efforts. At a House Appropriations subcommittee meeting on February 11, he said he is concerned that a pacts on land-management practices like vegetative buffer strips, saturated buffers along streams, and nutrient-management plans. They might also look at some kind of cover-crop requirement. With the monocultures we have, we don’t have anything out there seven or eight months a year to lock up the rains.

The state to confront the question of whether agriculture should be held accountable for nitrates that leach into urban drinking water. DMWW says the answer is yes. But instead of going after individual farms, the utility has sued three county drainage districts, arguing that they need to either push farmers to pollute less or install better filtering equipment to safeguard the water released into the Raccoon River, which provides drinking water for Des Moines’ 500,000 residents.

DMWW currently spends $1 million a year to remove nitrates from the city’s water. With nitrate levels reaching record highs, the utility says it will soon be forced to invest at least $100 million to upgrade equipment and raise customer fees by an estimated 10 percent. Backed by the Iowa Farm Bureau, the drainage districts counter that they don’t have the authority to police farm pollution. DMWW’s critics say that farmers should be encouraged to reduce nitrogen runoff through voluntary programs, not regulations. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack recently sided with those calling for voluntary efforts. At a House Appropriations subcommittee meeting on February 11, he said he is concerned that a pacts on land-management practices like vegetative buffer strips, saturated buffers along streams, and nutrient-management plans. They might also look at some kind of cover-crop requirement. With the monocultures we have, we don’t have anything out there seven or eight months a year to lock up the rains.

How can DMWW win this case?
First, they will have to prove the drainage districts are a “point-source” for pollution. Under the Clean Water Act, a “point-source” is any “discernable, confined, and discrete conveyance” from which pollutants may be discharged, typically a pipe. In the past, the EPA has said normal farming activities are exempt from the Clean Water Act because they’re not considered a “point-source” for pollution. Some livestock farms are, however, required to obtain permits. But the DMWW argues the drainage districts are artificially created and maintained, and so should be considered a “point-source.” Second, DMWW will have to show the water in question isn’t surface water, since agricultural stormwater coming off of farms is also exempt. DMWW is arguing the water flowing into the drainage ditches is actually groundwater, because it’s released by underground drainage tiles a few days after it rains.

Does that tiling happen in other parts of the country?
Certainly there is tiling in other states—Illinois, parts of Missouri and southern Minnesota. But Iowa is extensively tiled. Roughly 10 million of our 25 million acres of crop ground have subsurface tiling installed under them. People who aren’t used to that system find it hard to believe that we’ve put plumbing into that much of our state, but we’ve been doing it for about 100 years.

If the DMWW wins, would it force a substantial change in how farmers use fertilizer?
Not necessarily. I think you’re more likely to see potential impacts on land-management practices like vegetative buffer strips, saturated buffers along streams, and nutrient-management plans. They might also look at some kind of cover-crop requirement. With the monocultures we have, we don’t have anything out there seven or eight months a year to lock up the nutrients. Cover crops offer a really promising opportunity for nitrate control.

continued on page 2

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.

Barcoded Flats

You will get a tax break and your support of the SDWF will help protect the land and wildlife you love.
Do the drainage districts have the authority to ask farmers to clean up pollution or plant cover crops?

That’s one of the questions that have to be answered. Judge Bennett at the U.S. District Court recently certified several questions, including whether the drainage districts can actually sue, and sent them back to the Iowa Supreme Court to answer before the case can proceed. The districts say they were created solely for the purposes of drainage, not to tell people what can be done. But the DMWW argues that granting the districts absolute immunity doesn’t fit within the public interest. If the districts’ argument is true, they can’t have any responsibility for how the drainage is done or what the effect is, then the DMWW wants to know how that can be in the public’s interest.

Is the EPA set up to administer permits to Iowa’s drainage districts?

Actually, the Clean Water Act is administered by the state Department of Natural Resources. Just as DNR issues permits for concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), they could issue permits for drainage districts if they were required to. And if drainage districts don’t mean all of them would require or need permits. You can certainly make the argument the government could never do this job, but it is an awful long way down the road before we even know what kind of job it would have to do.

Is there legislative support for tackling water quality?

In 2010, 63 percent of voters amended the state constitution to create a protected natural resource trust fund called I.W.I.L.L. [Iowa’s Water, Land Legacy]. The next $75-cent increase in sales tax was supposed to be dedicated to the fund. Of course the legislature hasn’t been willing to raise the tax. I.W.I.L.L. could generate somewhere north of $150 million a year, over half of which would be dedicated to water quality, says Dan Mullins, director of the Water Quality Coalition. Whether or not I.W.I.L.L. would have filed the suit if the state had passed the sales tax, or if there was any indication state leaders were serious about addressing water quality issues.

What do you think of voluntary efforts like Iowa’s Nutrient Reduction Strategy, which is designed to help farmers curb nitrate runoff?

Even the Nutrient Reduction Strategy the governor and everyone loves to talk estimates the cost to clean up water would exceed a $1 billion. But yes, voluntary efforts have to play a part and many producers are adopting practices like cover crops. There’s no reason to think a purely voluntary approach would work. Speed limits aren’t voluntary. Alcohol limits for drivers aren’t voluntary. We use regulations as a means to get you to use more shampoo. I think the same kind of thing may apply, rinse and wash again. Why would they put that? It’s a great way to get you to use more shampoo. I think the same kind of thing may happen with fertilizers. Many observers believe ag retailers need to be more involved with water quality debates now that the lawsuit has already changed the discussion.

Whether or not DMWW wins isn’t necessarily important to whether it involves a broader conversation about agriculture’s impact on water quality. I.W.I.L.L. is an awful long way down the road before we even know what kind of lawsuit is a waste of money and time and a threat to farmers in the state. The lawsuit has already changed the discussion around water quality and agriculture and what the state’s going to do about it. There’s no question Iowa has a water-quality issue, and that it’s getting worse. I think people were very happy to kick the issue down the road with relatively minor levels of state funding and pilot projects that make it look like they’re putting in their best efforts. This litigation has been a catalyst to bring the matter to a head.

Do farmers in Iowa feel responsible for nitrate pollution?

One of the arguments you always hear people make is: “Oh my gosh, I’m not putting on any more fertilizer than I need. Why would I waste it? It costs so much already.” But I always ask my students if they read the instructions on the bottle of shampoo bottles. The bottles always say apply, rinse and wash again. Why would they put that? It’s a great way to get you to use more shampoo. I think the same kind of thing may happen with fertilizers. Many observers believe ag retailers need to be more involved with water quality debates now that the lawsuit has already changed the discussion.

Is the EPA set up to administer permits to Iowa’s drainage districts?

The actual lawsuit is fairly specifically tied to our system of drainage districts and our method of subsurface drainage of tile, which isn’t particularly common across agriculture. But this case is important because it involves a broader conversation about agriculture’s impact on water quality. I.W.I.L.L. is an awful long way down the road before we even know what kind of lawsuit is a waste of money and time and a threat to farmers in the state. The lawsuit has already changed the discussion around water quality and agriculture and what the state’s going to do about it. There’s no question Iowa has a water-quality issue, and that it’s getting worse. I think people were very happy to kick the issue down the road with relatively minor levels of state funding and pilot projects that make it look like they’re putting in their best efforts. This litigation has been a catalyst to bring the matter to a head.
President’s Column by Rich Widman

January was quite a month! Hunting season ended, and I turned a half-century old. If that doesn’t depress a guy, I don’t know what will. Sure, I can always look forward to another year, but I really noticed this season that I’m not the spring chicken that I’d like to think I am! Neck, shoulders, back, hips, knees—they all complain for a few days after every outing!

At least I’ve got the memories to keep me going. Like during the last week of pheasant season when I fell through the ice up to my knees, had to crawl about 10 yards to good ice, and then walk what seemed to be five miles back to my vehicle. Oh, and I had to carry my dog Pokey (aka Fang) part of the way because he tried to take an old injury. How do I know he was faking? Because when I set him down to try to take in all the available oxygen in the area, he took off after a scent that happened to be the only damn pheasant we saw walking around the damn dam.

However, I did end the year on a high note hunting on my good friend Terry’s land. I’m not going to lie; it was tough walking because there was snow on the ground, and not the easy walking snow. This was the crusty, almost-holds-your-weight-until-you-break-through-swear type of snow. The good thing was, we each shot our limit because a lot of the roosters were trying to bury themselves under the grass and snow, hoping the danger would walk on by without noticing them. Fortunately for us, these pheasants didn’t know a few things: 1.) We had great dogs—Jennie, Charlie and Bailey. No, Fang doesn’t get to go on these trips. 2.) Their colorful tail feathers were sticking out above the snow, making them easy for us to spot. 3.) We were all shooting well that day. In fact, I had some amazing shots—just ask the other guys!

A few weeks after that last hunt, I got to attend the Dakota Sportsman’s Game Feed and Membership Dinner in Watertown on the coldest night of the year. The radio said the wind-chill was 40 below, but the cold drive was worth it! I wasn’t going to miss the awesome banquet they put on for their members each year. They do a great job and have a lot of dedicated volunteers that make it happen. If your club has an event that you’d like me or a member of the SDWF board to attend, just let us know and we’ll try to get there!

The New Year brings us to the 2016 South Dakota Legislative Session. And once again, as we have done for 70 years now, SDWF will be there protecting sportsmen/women and all the people of South Dakota against bad legislation. Unfortunately, there are a few legislators that continue to introduce anti-sportsmen bills that SDWF has defeated in prior years. Why? The legislature’s time to get things accomplished is limited, and it’s too bad that some care more about their self-interests or personal pride than about the people of South Dakota.

If you’ve been a member of SDWF for very long, you know what I’m going to say next. Help us help you by sending in a little extra to support the Camo Coalition, which pays for our lobbyists (i.e. our watchdogs). Don’t forget to ask “JUST ONE” buddy to join SDWF—or better yet, ask all 18 of your hunting buddies—as one member did last month! And, at the very least, sign up to get Action Alert emails at www.sdwfcamo.net. That way you’ll know what is happening in the legislature, and you’ll get all the information when we need you to contact your Senator or Representative on a bill. Speaking your mind on important issues is free, and it makes all the difference between keeping your rights and losing them.

Finally, nothing says, “We’re out here, and you’d better listen to us” like orange hats and camo! We’re excited to have a lot of fellow sportsmen/women and conservation groups joining us at the Capitol Building in Pierre on February 8th this year for Camo Day! We’ll let you know how it goes!

Executive Director’s Update by Chris Hesla

By the time you get this month’s Out-of-Doors the 2016 Legislative Session will be very close to being over. I think for the most part we had a very successful Session and have managed to kill most of the harmful Legislation that was introduced. Several years ago SDWF created a lobbying arm to handle our lobbying efforts. SDWF Camo to do our lobbying

As always, we could not effectively lobby or have the impact that SDWF Camo has in the legislature without YOUR generous donations to our “lobbyist fund” or without the many members who take time out of their daily lives to write an email, make a phone call or show up at their local crancker barrel and question their local legislator as to their intentions and how they plan to vote on issues important to us. There is still time to receive Camo’s daily legislative e-mails and other informative E-mails throughout the year. Go to sdwfcamo.net and join for free.

Our lobby days was a huge success we had many members there and as in every year the members from Beadle Co Sportsmen show up in force, and they always bring a donation check for our lobbyist fund. I would like to thank all of the Beadle County Sportsmen for their continued financial support of our lobbying efforts. Also a huge thank you to those who will donate when they get their solicitation letter from Camo.

I want to thank the following Conservation groups that helped in sponsoring Camo-Days and their members for showing up!

SD Ducks Unlimited, SE SD Sierra Club, The Nature Conservancy, SD Bow hunters Inc., Pheasants Forever, SD Walleyes Unlimited, Dakota Trout Unlimited, SD Izak Walton League, SD Waterfowl Assoc. and SD-WF-Camo.

We can and do make a difference!
ALEC is becoming increasingly involved in the public lands debate by providing model bills for Western states.
Lyndsey Gilpin
This week, Idaho senators met to vote on a new bill that would let county sheriffs, commissioners, and mayors decide if an area of federal land is at risk of wildfire, and demand that the federal government fix it. If the feds – usually Bureau of Land Management or U.S. Forest Service – don’t respond, local officials could coordinate with the state to take legal action.

But the bill didn’t come to a vote – it was met with contention from the Idaho Senate largely because it was aligned with the effort to transfer federal lands to state control. The law is also an example of a larger trend of legislation in Western states being derived from model bills created by the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). ALEC – not to be confused with the Utah-based American Lands Council (ALC) – is a nonprofit organization founded in 1973 by conservative activist Paul Weyrich that works to push principles of free-market enterprise, limited federal control, and more power for state governments. The group's political policy group based in Arlington, Virginia, whose corporate advisory board includes Exxon Mobil and tobacco giant Altria, is funded largely by the Koch family and is becoming increasingly involved in the land transfer movement by providing bill templates, research and public support to Western legislators.

The Idaho bill illustrates a pattern that seems to be developing in the West, says Center for Western Priorities policy director Greg Zimmerman. “Utah comes up with these ideas, passes them into law through their legislature, and through the ALEC network, [legislators] try and pass them in other states,” he says.

For instance, Utah Rep. Ken Ivory sponsored the Transfer of Public Lands Act, which demanded that Congress give states control of public lands. It passed in 2012, but little action has been taken to fulfill the bill’s goals. About a year later, ALEC wrote a similar model bill for land transfer laws, urging “all executive officers of this State, to exert their full powers to cooperate and assist Utah and the other States” to sell public land to state governments. In 2014, Ivory received ALEC’s “legislator of the year” award.

Soon after Utah passed its Catastrophic Wildfire and Public Nuisance Act last year, ALEC released model legislation for other states using almost identical language. Last month, a bill with that language was brought to the Arizona state Senate, but it was killed because the counties opposed it.

“It’s a cookie-cutter bill,” Idaho state Sen. Roy Lacey, a Democrat, says, referring to Idaho’s Abatement of Catastrophic Public Nuisance bill. “When you see the same thing being done in Utah and other states, it smacks of ALEC. It’s a toe in the door [of land transfer legislation]; telling the federal government they’re not doing a good job.”

The Idaho Freedom Foundation, a conservative think tank and ALEC member, played a major role in the bill proposal. Catastrophic wildfires are only worsening in the West, and fighting them already counts for over half the Forest Service’s budget. In Idaho, hundreds of thousands of acres burned last year, and the foundation places blame on the feds’ management decisions, underplaying the exceedingly complex impacts from drought and climate change. “It’s a simple bill and notion,” said Idaho Freedom Foundation vice president Fred Birmbaum. “Passing one piece of legislation won’t solve it but it does highlight the fact communities are threatened by federal forest land [management].” Birmbaum said the foundation was fully aware it was ALEC model legislation when they proposed it.

As the land transfer movement gains traction in the West, the links between ALEC and Western lawmakers become more clear. For instance, the Federal Lands Action Group, a relatively new organization started by U.S. Reps. Chris Stewart and Rob Bishop from Utah, held a forum in Washington, D.C., to introduce ALEC legislation to interested politicians earlier this month. The first speaker at the forum was Karla Jones, an ALEC staffer. Stewart said ALEC was chosen to present because its views on public lands “aligned well” with the Federal Lands Action Group. Jones talked about ALEC’s model policies, urged a timely transfer of federal lands to states, and showcased ALEC’s available resources to help states successfully transition to state-based land ownership.

“There is a widespread narrative, especially among Americans living in the East, that the federal government serves as a better environmental steward of the Western lands than states or private entities would,” she said in a statement. “This is a fiction.”

ALEC has played a role in public lands debates as far back as 1995, when it drafted the “Sagebrush Rebellion Act,” to establish mechanisms for public land transfer to state control, though the act never passed. The Center for Western Priorities estimates that up to six of ALEC’s model policies advocate public lands transfer. Four years ago, ALEC provided model legislation to undermine the Antiquities Act and give states power in designating national monuments. Then in 2015, the organization released a white paper, which it cites regularly for legislators, that concluded states would serve as “superior environmental and economic stewards of select lands within their borders.”

Though some legislators, like Ivory, are publicly open about their ALEC membership, the group does not release who its members are. ALEC did not respond to multiple requests for comment for this article. But according to Jones’ statements, more than 200 state legislators are members, and 85 members of Congress, seven governors, and four presidential candidates are alumni. In 2011, the Center for Media and Democracy, a liberal watchdog organization started by former Department of Justice official Lisa Graves, launched a project to identify legislators in the U.S. with ALEC ties. According to the center’s latest data, each state in the West has at least a handful of politicians involved with ALEC – with the most being in Utah and Idaho.

The Center for Western Priorities reported that, of the 36 public lands transfer bills introduced in state legislatures in the first half of 2015, a third were parroting ALEC legislation, either directly using its land transfer model policy or its other model policies, such as setting up land transfer studies or state public lands offices. This year, 14 bills have been introduced, Zimmerman says, and half have already been killed, including a transfer study bill in Washington and two bills regarding public access and land transfer in Wyoming.

Though the public nuisance bill doesn’t allow state officials to override federal decisions in wildfire management, it is an example of the burgeoning relationships between ALEC and Western legislators, says professor Robert Keiter, director of the Wallace Stegner Center for Land, Resources and the Environment at the University of Utah: “It seems to be directed at providing [more power] for state and local officials to influence on-the-ground-management of Forest Service, BLM, or other federal agencies.”
USE OF TRAIL CAMERAS AND BLINDS ON PUBLIC LANDS

The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Commission proposed the use of trail cameras and portable hunting blinds on public lands at their March meeting.

Portable tree stands, portable blinds and climbing devices that do not utilize nails, wire, or bolts for attachment are proposed to be allowed from Aug. 25 to Feb. 15, inclusive. Portable blinds may also be used during the spring turkey season.

The proposal would also allow for trail cameras placed on public lands owned, leased or controlled by the department; they may be attached to trees, posts or other structures by utilizing no more than one nail, bolt or screw. The name and address or the year and current applicable big game license number of the owner or user must be on the exterior of an unattended trail camera.

Previous regulations did not fully address the use of ground blinds and trail cameras; which are commonly used today. A five-day limit currently exists for leaving many types of recreational equipment and property on department lands. The department proposes to extend the period in which this equipment may be utilized and appropriately regulate its placement.

The Commission will finalize these proposals during their April 7-8, 2016, meeting at the McCrory Gardens in Brookings. Written comments can be emailed to wildinfo@state.sd.us. To be part of the official public record, comments must be received by 12 p.m. CDT on April 7, 2016. Please include your full name along with the city and state of residence. If you would like to comment in person, the public hearing will be April 7, 2016, at 2 p.m. CDT.


GFP FINALIZES THE 2016 DUCK AND GOOSE SEASONS

The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Commission finalized two waterfowl hunting seasons. Both the duck and goose seasons were finalized with no proposed changes from 2015.

2016 Duck Season
High Plains Zone: October 8, 2016 - January 12, 2017
Low Plains North & Low Plains Middle Zone: Sept. 24 - Dec. 6, 2016
Low Plains South Zone: October 8 - December 20, 2016

The duck limit may be comprised of no more than: five mallards (which may include no more than two hens), three wood ducks, three scaup, two redheads, two pintails, and two canvasbacks. Two bonus blue-winged teal may be taken in the first 16 days of each season. Fifteen coots and five mergansers (which may include no more than two hooded mergansers). The possession limit is three times the daily bag limit for ducks.

2016 Goose Season
Light Geese
Statewide: September 24 - December 18, 2016
Daily Limit: 50
Possession Limit: Unlimited
White-Fronted Geese
Statewide: September 24 - December 18, 2016
Daily Limit: 2
Possession Limit: Three times the daily limit.

Canada Geese (and Brant) - see map below for unit information.

Unit 1: October 1 - December 18, 2016
Daily Limit: 8
Possession Limit: Three times the daily limit.

Unit 2: October 31, 2016 February 12, 2017
Daily Limit: 4
Possession Limit: Three times the daily limit.

Unit 3: January 14-22, 2017
Daily Limit: 4
Possession Limit: Three times the daily limit.


ANGLERS REMINDED OF 2016 FISHING REGULATION CHANGES

South Dakota anglers should be aware of a few fishing regulation changes for 2016. Changes include: No longer a 15 inch minimum length restriction for walleye on Bitter Lake (Day County) or Cattail/Kettle Lake Complex (Marshall County). No longer length restrictions on largemouth or smallmouth bass on Lake Cochrane (Duel County) or Waubay Lake (Day County). The minimum length restriction for walleye taken from the area below Fort Randall Dam downstream to the SD/NE border is now 15 inches year-round. Anglers can now use their smartphone to display a copy of their fishing license in lieu of a paper copy. These and additional regulation changes can be found in the “What’s New for 2016” section of the 2016 South Dakota Fishing Handbook and online at http://gfp.sd.gov/ePubs/wildlife/2016-fishing-handbook/. - See more at: http://gfp.sd.gov/news/news/january/14.aspx#sthash.onvUpQg2.dpuf
**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 and/or making a donation. Your contributions help ensure the future of the SDWF’s Wildlife Legacy Council! Please consider your donation today.

- Level V: Elephant $1,000 & above; Level IV: Buffalo $501 - $999; Level III: Elk $301 - $500; Level II: Deer $201 - $300; and Level I: Pheasant $100 - $200.

**SDWF Donors for the Terminally Ill**

- Level I: Pheasant
- Level II: Deer
- Level III: Elk
- Level IV: Buffalo
- Level V: Eagle

**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.

**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!

**Tips**

- 888-OVERBAG

**GFP Commission Finalizes Hunting Allowance for the Terminally Ill**

GFP Commission Finalizes Hunting Allowance for the Terminally Ill

PIERRE, S.D. - The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Commission adopted a proposal that will provide a terminally ill South Dakota resident the opportunity to hunt big game.

According to the new rule, the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Department Secretary may authorize a resident who has been diagnosed by a licensed doctor of medicine to have a terminal illness to hunt deer, antelope and turkey.

The rule will also authorize the GFP Secretary to provide allowances for persons under the age of 26 who have cancer, other terminal illnesses or a disease which will significantly reduce their life expectancy. The rule will allow hunting only during established hunting seasons, and provide a one-time opportunity to harvest no more than one deer, antelope or turkey.

The rule also allows that certain restrictions may be waived or additional terms or conditions may be imposed necessary to facilitate participation for the person receiving authorization. - See more at: http://gfp.sd.gov/news/news/january/14.aspx#sthash.onvUpQg2.dpuf
Six Sustainable Ways to Maintain a Natural Garden

By David Mizejewski

The National Wildlife Federation has been educating and empowering people to create wildlife-friendly gardens through the Garden for Wildlife program since 1973. Each of us can help support local wildlife populations by making sure our gardens or landscapes provide the four components of habitat: natural sources of food, water, cover and places to raise young.

You can create a wildlife-friendly garden or landscape and have it recognized as a Certified Wildlife Habitat. Photo by David Mizejewski.

But’s there more to creating a wildlife habitat garden than just these four components. How you maintain your garden is also critically important. Creating a wildlife-friendly space that attracts birds, butterflies and other wildlife and then spraying toxic pesticides everywhere or letting your cat catch and kill the wildlife defeats the purpose.

Here are six sustainable ways you can maintain your natural for wildlife beyond just providing the components of habitat.

**Plant Native Plants**

Purple coneflowers are a commercially available native plant that support pollinators and songbirds. Photo by Jordan Meeter via Flickr Creative Commons.

Native plants are the most environmentally-friendly choice because if planted in the proper place to match their growing requirements, they thrive in the soils, moisture and weather of your region. That means less wasteful supplemental watering and pest problems that require toxic chemicals.

Native plants are also the plants that native wildlife have formed symbiotic relationships with over thousands of years, and therefore the most sustainable way of offering habitat.

Exotic plants that evolved in other parts of the world or native plants that have been cultivated by humans into forms that don’t exist in nature do not support wildlife as well as native plants, and sometimes even escape into the wild and become invasive exotics that destroy natural habitat.

**Cultivate Healthy Soil**

Composting is a great way to improve your garden soil. Photo by normanack via Flickr Creative Commons.

You don’t need to use chemical fertilizers to have a thriving garden. Creating garden beds and landscapes that have active underground ecosystem of earthworms and microorganisms that keep plants healthy can be achieved using composted soil with organic materials that include micronutrients and minerals. Applying compost also provides an aerated, non-compacted base for plant roots to thrive and to absorb water and nutrients, which is key in ensuring plant health. Healthy plants mean better wildlife habitat.

Conventional lawns and many ornamental exotic plants require an exorbitant amount of clean water to stay green. Choosing native plants that are adapted to regional rainfall and soil moisture content is a great way to conserve this precious resource.

In suburban and urban areas, much of the water that hits the landscape washes away down the storm drains, often carrying pollutants and soil with it. Reducing your lawn in favor of densely planted garden beds helps minimize runoff, and you can plant a rain garden specifically designed to collect and absorb rainwater to keep if from pouring into storm drains.

**Encourage Pest Predators and Parasites**

Convergent lady beetles are predators of aphids and other garden pests. Photo by Gary Chang via Flickr Creative Commons.

Insects are not the enemy in the garden. In fact, they can be the key in keeping populations of pests down. By planting native plants you attract populations of insects such as ladybugs and other carnivorous beetles, dragonflies, parasitic wasps, and praying mantises that keep the balance in the garden by other harmful plant pests. Spiders, toads, bats and even songbirds are voracious predators of pests too. Creating a diverse planted garden that attracts an array of wildlife is a much better way to control pests and keeping things in balance than spraying toxic pesticides.

**Minimize or Eliminate Chemicals**

Toxic pesticide use is bad for wildlife. Photo by Peter Oranisciak via Flickr Creative Commons.

Help wildlife by eliminating or at a minimum significantly reducing the use of chemical fertilizers, herbicides and other pesticides. Going chemical-free ensures that your garden is a healthy, safe place for wildlife as well as your pets and family. There are many tried and true organic gardening methods, from fertilizing with compost to hand-picking pests. If you must resort to chemicals on tough cases such as removal of invasive exotic plants or some other out of control infestation, use the most targeted product that breaks down quickly in the environment, and always read and follow the labels exactly. Non-chemical, organic gardening practices in your garden or landscape are always the best option for wildlife.

**Control Pets**

Domesticated cats kill billions of wild birds each year. Photo by Barnabas Nagy via Flickr Creative Commons.

Our pets and other domesticated species can have a huge negative impact on wildlife. House cats kill billions of birds and small animals each year and exotic pets that have been dumped into the wild such as Burmese pythons can become invasive exotics hunting native wildlife. They’re just doing what comes naturally to them, but this impact of our pets is unnatural and just an extension of the negative impact that we humans have on wildlife. It’s up to us to protect wildlife from our pets.

**Minimize or Eliminate Chemicals**

Conserve Water

Sprinklers waste a lot of water. Photo by Todd Morris via Flickr Creative Commons.

You don’t need to use chemical fertilizers to have a thriving garden. Creating garden beds and landscapes that have active underground ecosystem of earthworms and microorganisms that keep plants healthy can be achieved using composted soil with organic materials that include micronutrients and minerals. Applying compost also provides an aerated, non-compacted base for plant roots to thrive and to absorb water and nutrients, which is key in ensuring plant health. Healthy plants mean better wildlife habitat.

Conventional lawns and many ornamental exotic plants require an exorbitant amount of clean water to stay green. Choosing native plants that are adapted to regional rainfall and soil moisture content is a great way to conserve this precious resource.

In suburban and urban areas, much of the water that hits the landscape washes away down the storm drains, often carrying pollutants and soil with it. Reducing your lawn in favor of densely planted garden beds helps minimize runoff, and you can plant a rain garden specifically designed to collect and absorb rainwater to keep if from pouring into storm drains.

**Encourage Pest Predators and Parasites**

Convergent lady beetles are predators of aphids and other garden pests. Photo by Gary Chang via Flickr Creative Commons.

Insects are not the enemy in the garden. In fact, they can be the key in keeping populations of pests down. By planting native plants you attract populations of insects such as ladybugs and other carnivorous beetles, dragonflies, parasitic wasps, and praying mantises that keep the balance in the garden by other harmful plant pests. Spiders, toads, bats and even songbirds are voracious predators of pests too. Creating a diverse planted garden that attracts an array of wildlife is a much better way to control pests and keeping things in balance than spraying toxic pesticides.

**Minimize or Eliminate Chemicals**

Toxic pesticide use is bad for wildlife. Photo by Peter Oranisciak via Flickr Creative Commons.

Help wildlife by eliminating or at a minimum significantly reducing the use of chemical fertilizers, herbicides and other pesticides. Going chemical-free ensures that your garden is a healthy, safe place for wildlife as well as your pets and family. There are many tried and true organic gardening methods, from fertilizing with compost to hand-picking pests. If you must resort to chemicals on tough cases such as removal of invasive exotic plants or some other out of control infestation, use the most targeted product that breaks down quickly in the environment, and always read and follow the labels exactly. Non-chemical, organic gardening practices in your garden or landscape are always the best option for wildlife.

**Control Pets**

Domesticated cats kill billions of wild birds each year. Photo by Barnabas Nagy via Flickr Creative Commons.

Our pets and other domesticated species can have a huge negative impact on wildlife. House cats kill billions of birds and small animals each year and exotic pets that have been dumped into the wild such as Burmese pythons can become invasive exotics hunting native wildlife. They’re just doing what comes naturally to them, but this impact of our pets is unnatural and just an extension of the negative impact that we humans have on wildlife. It’s up to us to protect wildlife from our pets.
said Gabbert. “We know that not every program will work for every
are out there to help landowners with improving habitat on their land,”
Conservation District and others will be available for presentations
Conservation Service (NRCS), Pheasants Forever, the Minnehaha
they are looking for.” Representatives from GFP, Natural Resource
ested agricultural producers will help them get the habitat information
biologist. “Putting together a series of workshops that can help inter
information on how to create winter cover, food plots, native grass seedings
University,” provide landowners with practical and technical informa
four weeks of workshops in Sioux Falls aimed at providing habitat

Sportsmen/women- Want to help fund SDWF and the Y outh Conservation Camp plus reduce your taxes this year?  Donate stocks and land to the SDWF . Y ou not only won’t have to pay
settlement or substitute a gun of equal or
SDWF reserves the right to offer a cash
tickets are sold.
♦ One gun will be awarded for each
♦ SDWF reserves the right to offer a cash
draw or substitute a gun of equal or
greater value.

Drawing to be held at
Spring Board Meeting, May, 2016.
Void where prohibited by law. Your presence
or contribution not necessary to win.
SDWF, PO Box 7075, Pierre, SD 57501
(605) 224-7524 • www.sdwf.org

The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department (GFP) will host
four weeks of workshops in Sioux Falls aimed at providing habitat
information to interested landowners. The workshop, titled “Habitat
University,” provide landowners with practical and technical informa-
on how to create winter cover, food plots, native grass seedings
and other topics. “Landowners want more information about putting
habitat on the ground,” said Andy Gabbert, GFP habitat resource
biologist. “Putting together a series of workshops that can help inter-
ested agricultural producers will help them get the habitat information
they are looking for.” Representatives from GFP, Natural Resource
Conservation Service (NRCS), Pheasants Forever, the Minnehaha
Conservation District and others will be available for presentations
and questions at each workshop. “Habitat programs and resources
are out there to help landowners with improving habitat on their land,”
said Gabbert. “However, not every program will work for every
landowner. The options available for habitat are diverse and we want
the meat of explaining these programs and resources with our partner organizations.” Online registration is preferred, but
not required. Attendees can fill out the form online at http://habitat.
sd.gov/workshops/default.aspx. The first 20 people to pre-register
will receive a copy of the book, “Ringnecked-Pheasants Thriving in
South Dakota.” The workshops will be from 7-9 p.m. CST and held
at the GFP Outdoor Campus in Sioux Falls on Feb. 18 and 24 and
March 3 and 10. For a complete schedule of topics, visit http://habi-
tat.sd.gov/workshops/default.aspx. For more information, contact
Andy Gabbert at 605.367.4411. About Habitat Pays: Habitat Pays is
a joint effort between the South Dakota Departments of Game, Fish
and Parks and Agriculture to connect farmers and ranchers to the ap-
propriate habitat resources and help them implement wildlife habitat
where it makes the most sense. Habitat Pays is designed to provide
more information and education to assist landowners in designing,
developing and funding habitat on their land; working directly with
habitat advisors who possess the knowledge of federal, state and
local programs. - See more at: http://gfp.sd.gov/news/news/janu-
ary/15.aspx#sthash.cxtAKaqe.dpuf