

PRAIRIE COTEAU HABITAT PARTNERSHIP

SOUTH DAKOTA

Great Plains Fire Learning Network

5.0 million acres



Prairie Coteau wetlands and grasslands

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THE PRAIRIE COTEAU REGION of South Dakota and Minnesota is an excellent example of the once vast northern tallgrass prairie. The area is characterized by native big and little bluestem, switchgrass, indiangrass and blue grama, with bur oak woodlands surrounding wetlands to the northeast. These grasslands are interspersed with thousands of wetland basins and small forested valleys known as coulees. As fire is gradually reintroduced, native grasses and forbs burst forth abundantly. Today, this mosaic of wetland and prairie attracts a diverse array of waterfowl and grassland birds. The landscape also provides excellent habitat for rare prairie-dependent insects, including numerous species of butterflies.

The Partnership's goals are to conserve biodiversity, including rare and endangered species; improve management practices on lands that are currently being managed to improve native species habitat; increase the number of private landowners using ecologically sound prescribed fire and grazing practices and model appropriate disturbance regimes while exploring new niche markets for participating landowners. Under the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Private Stewardship Grant Program, the partnership has worked with Region 6 fire personnel to ensure the fire program meets all national and regional FWS and National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) standards for fire planning and implementation.

The Partnership was formed in 2004 as part of the Great Plains FLN, and has seen an impressive increase in landowner participation and interest over the years. To date, 20 landowners across nine counties have participated, implementing 5,000 acres of fire and monitoring for ecological effects. Outreach and education—at farm and home shows, through landowner tours and SDSU Extension 'Pasture Walks' and at a 2009 landowner tour and forum—along with partnering to secure long-term funding, have set the stage for continuing growth in the effectiveness of the Partnership's activities.

LANDSCAPE PARTNERS

Bureau of Indian Affairs
Day County Conservation District
Ducks Unlimited
Ecosun Prairie Farms
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
National Park Service – Pipestone National Monument (MN)
Northern Prairies Land Trust
Pheasants Forever
Private Landowners
South Dakota Dept. of Agriculture – Wildland Fire Suppression
South Dakota Department of Game, Fish, and Parks
South Dakota Fire Marshall's Office
South Dakota Grasslands Coalition
South Dakota Natural Resources Conservation Service
South Dakota State University – Animal and Ranch Sciences, Wildlife and Fisheries
South Dakota State University – Extension Service
The Nature Conservancy
Upper Big Sioux Watershed Project
USDA Forest Service
U.S. FWS – Big Stone NWR (MN)
U.S. FWS – Madison WMD
U.S. FWS – Partners for Fish and Wildlife
U.S. FWS – Waubay NWR

LANDSCAPE VISION

The Partnership will promote a greater appreciation of the value of native tallgrass prairie by working with agencies, landowners and the public to return to a more natural fire and grazing regime.

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