

*South Dakota Chapter*

**The Wildlife Society**

February 2007

### **President's Message**

In the words of the Northern Great Plains Working Group, "No single influence, government or private, has manifested greater impacts on the nation's landscape and its wildlife assets than federal agricultural policy.... Current and past Farm Bills offer powerful tools for achieving.... wildlife benefits on an unprecedented scale".

Recently, several SDTWS members, including myself, sat down to talk via conference call about the 2007 Farm Bill with TWS' Associate Director of Government Affairs, Laura Bies. I've had a great deal of personal interest in Farm Bill politics ever since I traveled to farm shows across North Dakota prior to the 2002 Farm Bill to engage farmers and ranchers in conversation regarding conservation and its place in the Farm Bill. But during this particular conference call with Carl Madsen, Kurt Forman, Bill Smith, and Chad Switzer, I felt more like a mouse in the corner, just soaking up the wealth of information, than a major contributor to the conversation. In Kurt's words, "Carl was working on Farm Bill issues when the idea of CRP was first introduced". Obviously, I had a lot to learn.

The key points of that conference call and in SDTWS' official letter to TWS were the following: 1) continuation of Swampbuster, a wetland compliance program that couples wetland protection with eligibility for Farm Bill benefits; 2) the use of a new "Sodsaver" program that would prevent native sod converted to cropland from being eligible for any USDA program funds or benefits, including, but not limited to, commodity price supports and crop insurance; 3) reauthorization and expansion of CRP, one of the nation's most successful, beneficial, and popular conservation programs ever implemented; and 4) insistence that no bio-energy production should occur on lands currently enrolled in existing farm bill conservation programs, including CRP.

SDTWS' conference call with Laura Bies was the culmination of a long and fruitful year preparing for the 2007 Farm Bill. This spring, SDTWS became an official member of the Northern Great Plains Working Group (NGPWG), a local coalition of organizations and agencies committed to the continuance of the wildlife benefits of Farm Bill initiatives in the Dakotas and northeastern Montana. This summer, the executive board selected Chad Switzer to act as SDTWS' Representative to the NGPWG, which has been an exceptionally active position. In August, I represented SDTWS at a meeting between Representative Stephanie Herseth and the South Dakota Conservation Alliance. The meeting was designed to brief Herseth on a potential "Sodsaver" provision in the 2007 Farm Bill that could effectively curb the loss of native prairie. It was a productive meeting that opened up doors for further communication with the offices of both Representative Herseth and Senator Tim

Johnson. With Kurt Forman, State Coordinator for the USFWS' Partners for Fish & Wildlife Program, coming on as president in March, native prairie conservation and other measures in the Conservation Title of the Farm Bill will remain a top priority in the upcoming year.

Despite our large strides in the Farm Bill arena, it is not the only arena that SDTWS had been active in this year. I have sent letters to our national delegates regarding the Wetlands Loan Act, Global Warming Campaign, and drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Thanks to the expertise of SDTWS' dedicated committee chairs, SDTWS has commented on a diversity of conservation issues in the state, including a proposal to increase guiding permits on Fort Pierre National Grasslands, a proposal to introduce black-footed ferrets on Wind Cave National Park, and a new conservation plan for the Norbeck Wildlife Preserve, just to name a few. To say the least, it has been an interesting and productive year. I have thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to represent you this past year. I am confident that with the new board elected in March, SDTWS will continue to be in very capable hands.

Bridgette Flanders-Wanner  
President, South Dakota chapter of The Wildlife Society

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Minutes of the November 9, 2006 Executive Board Meeting of the South Dakota Chapter of The Wildlife Society</b></p>
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President Bridgette Flanders-Wanner recognized a quorum & called the meeting to order at 11:09 am at the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) Wetlands Office, Brookings, SD. Board members present were Bridgette Flanders-Wanner, Will Morlock, Kurt Forman, KC Jensen, Tom Kirschenmann, & Art Smith. Also present was Eddie Childers and Boyd Schultz for part of the meeting.

June meeting minutes were distributed. Morlock motioned to accept the minutes with no changes, Jensen seconded, motion passed (5-0).

September meeting minutes were distributed. Jensen motioned to accept the minutes with several typo corrections, Kirschenmann seconded, motion passed (5-0).

June, September, and November Treasurer's reports were distributed. Problems were noted with getting statements for the general investments going to Smith (they still go to Flanders-Wanner). Jensen motioned to accept all three reports, Morlock seconded, motion passed (5-0).

### **Old Business**

#### Correspondence Sent

- Flanders-Wanner sent Punch Podoll a letter explaining the reason for not following up on the public lands sale initiative. Punch still wanted the letter to be sent, the Board decided that the issue had passed, but would keep the information handy in case it resurfaces in the future.

#### Correspondence Received

- Funding request from TWS for information technology (IT) support (see New Business below).
- U.S. Forest Service (USFS) invitation to attend Norbeck Wildlife Preserve open house. Dennie Mann was going to attend, but was informed by USFS that this was only a For Your Information – there was no need to attend.
- Pheasants Forever request for funding for educational program (see New Business below).

- Cc on NDTWS Chapter regarding management of Missouri River. ND Chapter is also feeling out SD asking Chapter to consider joining coalition.
- USFS notice on Dakota Prairie Grasslands Livestock Grazing record of decision (ROD). Board briefly discussed statewide grazing/AUM allocations on grasslands. Jensen will keep an eye on the ROD.

#### South Dakota Conservation Alliance activities

Forman will send Flanders-Wanner bullet statements to be forwarded to Laura Bies. Forman informed Board of potential activities with SDCA and Swampbusters and USDA wetlands definitions.

#### Jones SPL land exchange

No new information, assume exchange has been dropped.

#### Committee Involvement: Summary of Responses from Committee Chairs

Flanders-Wanner led much of this discussion, with plenty of subsequent Board inputs.

- Education and Information

This group requested Board input. Flanders-Wanner will ask other Chapter I&E committees on what they do – this is requested by Chapter Chair, Laura Hubers. Basic question the Board had was, who or what is our target – educating the public or Chapter members? Board was more comfortable with public outreach – additionally, other Chapter members have interests in this area as well. Flanders-Wanner will get info to Hubers, and have her and other interested members conference call to develop the Committee’s direction.

- Book Services

Board agreed to dissolve the book account into the Chapter’s general account, mandate that the Committee report to the membership, via the newsletter, twice per year about the services the Committee provides (motion and second unknown, motion passed, 5-0).

- Fish and Wildlife Diversity and Endangered Species

Chair, Eileen Dowd-Stukel, recommended combining these two committees, Board agreed, motion by Morlock, seconded by Jensen, motion passed (5-0, Forman gone). Dowd-Stukel concerned that others may want to contribute to the Committee but think she has it all “tied-up.”

- Wetlands and Waterbird Recognition

Morlock motioned to disband, seconded by Kirschenmann, motion passed (4-0, Forman gone).

- Awards

No changes, Board reaffirmed the need to support this committee to continue getting nominations.

- Energy Issues

New committee, absorb current Wind Turbine into this one. Board envisions this committee having several subcommittees or working groups within it based on issues and/or energy topic. Each subcommittee leader would be Co-Chair of Energy Issues. By default, Jensen has been chair of Wind Turbines lately. Smith is interested in biofuels; Jensen and Smith would start as Co-Chairs of this committee. Kirschenmann motioned to create this committee as described above, Forman seconded, motion passed (5-0).

- Grasslands- Public-Lands related Committees

Board had a lot of discussion on these committees, Eddie Childress and Boyd Schultz also contributed. Final decision was to form Public Lands, Grasslands, and Wetlands committees (3 committees) where the existing Private and Public Land Management committee would turn into the Public Lands, motioned by Forman, Kirschenmann seconded, motion passed (5-0). Desire of Board was to encourage a good cross-representation of all agencies on these committees.

- Resource Activism

Morlock motioned to disband, seconded by Jensen, motion passed (5-0).

- Summary Remarks:

An overview of the changes on this and other committees should be presented at the annual

meeting.

Board should also employ the idea of “sunset clauses” on new Special Committees at their formation – clause can be modified at the time of their expiration if deemed necessary. This would be a good concept to bring up at the next annual business meeting.

Requests for new committees need to be accompanied by proposed goals and mission at the time of the request.

1 paragraph Committee summaries/write-ups to be proposed by each committee’s chairs by 31Dec06 for Board review. These write-ups will eventually be posted on the Chapter’s website like the New England Chapter.

Goals, emerging, and potential issues for the upcoming year should be part of each committee’s annual report.

#### Additional Items – TWS Leaders Lunch

Summary provided by Jensen, Smith, and Flanders-Wanner.

#### **New Business**

##### USFS Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to Modify Interior Lands Management Plan (control prairie dogs)

Childers and Smith briefed Board on the concern and overriding politics of the issue. Childers summarized the EIS work and why Scott Larson’s email was sent to the Board. Board discussed several aspects of issue and asked details. Board decided to stay on top of issue, but since comment period had expired would wait until late summer when draft of EIS would be available for comment.

##### Funding Request from TWS for IT Support

Flanders-Wanner read letter to Board. Smith described additional details from his trip to Bethesda. Jensen motioned to send \$750, seconded by Forman. Ensuing discussion raised funding level to \$1,000, motion amended, motion passed (5-0).

##### Funding Request from Pheasants Forever for Educational Program

Flanders-Wanner read faxed letter to Board. Few details on how money would be spent were available. Board would prefer to support SD person’s registration and wants to see more information on costs. Morlock will look into additional details and forward to Board for consideration.

##### Newsletter items

- Sending newsletter to key non-members. Used to do this, but got away from it, probably for postage costs reasons. Board decided to send emailed newsletter to TWS Council, CMPS Board, SD National Congressional representatives, Governor’s office, and surrounding state chapter presidents.
- Post newsletter to website. Not currently done, held as a benefit for membership. All surrounding state chapter posts their newsletters. Board discussed reasoning, Forman motioned to put newsletter on website, motion passed (5-0).
- Have submissions to Pavelka by 30Nov06.
- Invite members to participate in energy technical review – Flanders-Wanner.
- Northern Great Plains Working Group – Chad Switzer.
- CMPS annual meeting – Smith.
- SDSU student activities – Jensen.
- President’s message – Flanders-Wanner

##### 2007 Meeting

March 5-7, 2007. Jarrod Johnson and Brian Jennings (American Coalition of Ethanol Producers) are potential invited speakers. Terry Grosz is nailed down as plenary. Enough complimentary rooms will

be needed to be covered by the Board for speakers.

Board felt this is the best time to try and involve conservation officers in Chapter activities. Morlock is taking much of this project on himself. Morlock will send information to Andy Alban and Emmett Keyser regarding this year's meeting. May have a one day spike in attendance, and this could affect banquet tickets.

2008 Meeting

Kirschenmann presented some details on what the Huron Event Center can offer for the 2008 meeting. Feeling by Board is Cedar Shore is getting too complacent with Chapter's regular business, needs some competition.

Additional New Business – Prairie Grouse Meeting

Kirschenmann reported that the Prairie Grouse Technical Council is being hosted at Cedar shore, October 7-10, 2007.

Next Board Meeting

The next board meeting was set for Wednesday, January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2007 in Chamberlain, 11:00 am CDT.

Kirschenmann moved to adjourn, seconded by Morlock. Motion passed (4-0, Jensen gone). Meeting adjourned at 3:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Art Smith  
Secretary/Treasurer, SDTWS

# 2007 SDTWS Annual Meeting

## March 5-7, 2007 Cedar Shores Resort, Oacoma, SD

### Monday, March 5<sup>th</sup>

11:00 am-1:00 pm Registration and Free Lunch (lunch sponsored by the Truax Company)

1:00 pm-1:10 pm Welcome and Introductions

1:10 pm-4:30 pm Special Session: “*Grassland Legacies*” Confirmed Presenters .....

Jarrod Johnson, Commissioner, South Dakota School and Public Lands Office  
Brian Jennings, President, American Coalition for Ethanol  
Jodie Hickman, Executive Director, South Dakota Cattlemen’s Association  
Dr. Scott Stephens, Director of Conservation Planning, Ducks Unlimited Incorporated  
Dr. Jim Ringelman, Director of Conservation Programs for the Dakotas and  
Montana, Ducks Unlimited Incorporated  
Bill Smith, Senior Wildlife Biologist, South Dakota Dept. of Game, Fish and Parks  
Pete Bauman, Director of Community Based Conservation, The Nature Conservancy

6:00 pm Social and Fund Raiser Auction

### Tuesday, March 6<sup>th</sup>

8:30 am-12:00 pm SDTWS Business Meeting

12:00 pm-1:00 pm Lunch

1:00 pm-4:30 pm Professional Presentations. Confirmed Presenters .....

Jeff Vonk, Secretary, South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks  
Dr. Carter Johnson, SDSU. Vulnerability of Prairie Wetlands and Waterfowl to Climate  
Change  
Chuck Loesch, USFWS. Drainage Impacts to Prairie Pothole Region Wetlands in North and  
South Dakota  
Joel Brice, Delta Waterfowl. Predator Management in NE South Dakota  
Bridgette Flanders-Wanner, USFWS. Invasive Plants on USFWS-owned Native Prairies in  
North and South Dakota

6:00 pm Social

7:00 pm Awards Banquet.

Guest Speaker: Terry Grosz.,

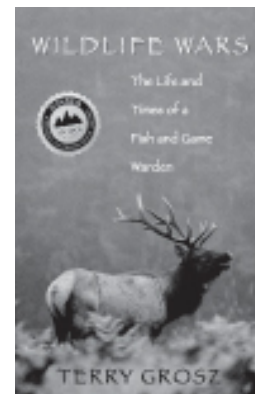
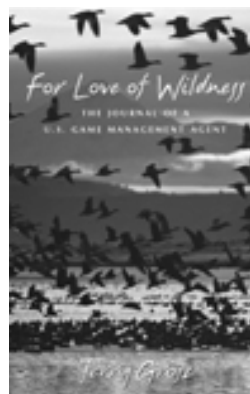
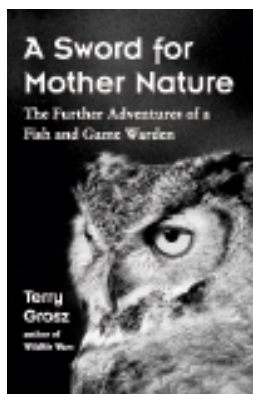
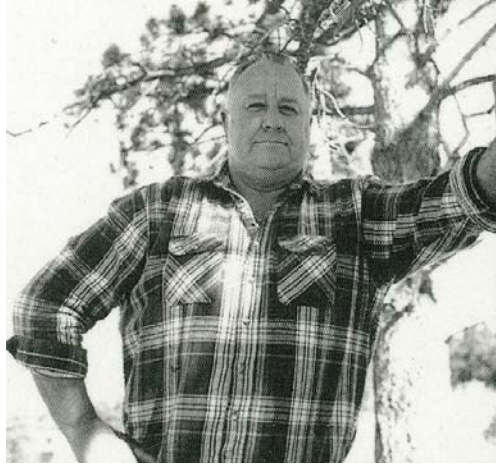
“*Wildlife Wars---- Reflections on 32 years of Wildlife Law Enforcement*”

Wednesday, March 7<sup>th</sup>

8:00am-12:00 pm Student Presentations

Adjourn

## *Terry Grosz Will Highlight 2007 SDTWS Meetings*



We are very fortunate to have Terry Grosz as the banquet speaker for the 2007 SDTWS meetings. Terry will also be hosting a book signing event during the meetings. Proceeds from his books go to

Saint Jude Children's Research Hospital. Terry worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Law Enforcement Division in a wide variety of vital positions from 1970 to 1998. Upon his retirement, he has authored a variety of books and has been the subject of a cable television documentary highlighting some of his most harrowing law enforcement experiences. Noted below are several editorial reviews of Terry's writings.

"Environmentalism meets Indiana Jones in these rip-snorting tales of a former wildlife conversation officer....A bear of a man—six-foot-four, over 300 pounds—Grosz relates his exploits in adventures full of slam-bang action and bravado tempered by a coolheaded sense of humor."-----PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

"Having had the privilege of working with Terry Grosz on wildlife stories, I knew he was a master game warden. What I did not know is that he is also a master raconteur. His adventures in 32 years of enforcing wildlife law astonish even his fellow wardens, and he tells them in a way that keeps you turning the pages till there aren't any more."-----TED WILLIAMS, Editor-at-Large, *Audubon Magazine*, Conservation Editor, *Fly Rod & Reel*

"Because wildlife is important, wildlife law enforcement officers are important, and Terry 'Tiny' Grosz was one good one. He recounts his lively and dangerous career as a wildlife cop in the same exuberant, unpretentious style it was lived—something like Louis L'Amour meets Mike Hammer."-----DAVID PETERSEN, editor of *A Hunter's Heart*, author of *Elkheart* and *Ghost Grizzlies*

For additional information regarding Terry's visit to the SDTWS meetings contact Kurt Forman at 605-692-8359.

## 2007 SDTWS Annual Meeting Approaching *Motel Rooms Going Fast.....*

The 2007 SDTWS Annual Meeting will again be held at the Cedar Shore Resort (734-6376) in Oacoma, South Dakota. The dates for the meeting are March 5-7, 2007. A block of rooms has been reserved for the SDTWS. **These rooms will be held until February 5<sup>th</sup>.** Early indications are that rooms at Cedar Shores will be at a premium this year. If you are planning to attend the meetings we encourage you to make your reservations soon. When Cedar Shores fills, additional lodging can be found at the following Oacoma area motels:

Comfort Inn, 234-4222

Days Inn, 734-4100

Holiday Inn Express, 734-5593

Oasis Inn-Kelly Inn, 734-6061

### ***Reminder.....Auction Items Needed for SDTWS Fund Raiser***

As co-chair of the fund-raising committee, I would like to again Thank You for supporting our annual fund-raiser. Dollars generated from this event assist the chapter in sponsoring several events throughout the year, such as student scholarships, Bald Eagle Awareness Day, educational programs, supporting national programs, and help keep meeting costs and associated fees to a minimum. The success of the fund-raiser is due to great items donated by sponsors and SDTWS members. So, if you have any items that you would be willing to donate for the live auction, please bring them. Your donation is greatly appreciated.

Tom Kirschenmann

# **South Dakota Chapter of the Wildlife Society**

## **2007 Executive Board Elections**

Information on candidates for President Elect, Secretary-Treasurer and Executive Board Member is presented below. If you are not able to attend the 2007 SDTWS annual meeting at the Cedar Shores Resort, an absentee ballot is available on Page 12 of this edition of *A Prairie Voice*.

### **Candidate for President-Elect:**

#### **Kent C. (KC) Jensen**

Dr. Jensen is an Assistant Professor and joined South Dakota State University in December of 2003. His teaching responsibilities include Ornithology, Principles of Wildlife Management and Waterfowl Ecology and Management. Dr. Jensen advises both undergraduate and graduate students. His appointment is 75% teaching and 25% research. His main professional interests are in the area of avian ecology and habitat management. He has particular interest in waterfowl and wetland ecology, birds of prey, and upland game birds. He has worked and conducted research on wetland habitats and associated bird communities throughout North America. Dr. Jensen also has extensive experience in wildlife and natural resource education with Native American tribes and Tribal Colleges throughout the Northern Great Plains. He has an adjunct appointment at Oglala Lakota College and is a member of their Graduate Faculty.

### **Candidate for Secretary-Treasurer:**

#### **Art Smith**

Art Smith is the Program Administrator for the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks' Wildlife Damage Management Program and has been with Game, Fish and Parks since January 2001. Prior to that he worked as a wildlife statistics consultant for two Canadian Provinces, four states, the USGS National Wildlife Health Center, and the Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit in Madison, Wisconsin.

Art earned his Bachelor of Science in Ecology and Systematic Biology from Cal Poly University, San Luis Obispo, CA and Master of Science in Wildlife Ecology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He is a Certified Wildlife Biologist, recently completed his Professional Development Certification, and has been nationally active in human/wildlife conflict issues for the past decade. He has been a Past-President and is completing his first term as Secretary-Treasurer for the Chapter. Art is currently a Board Member at Large for the Section, served on the TWS Conservation Education Award Committee from 2000-04 and as Chair in 2003-2004, currently serves as a member of the TWS Publications and Strategic Planning committees, and Chair of TWS Wildlife Damage Management Working Group.

"I am honored to again be given the opportunity to be considered for the position of Secretary/Treasurer. South Dakota consists of a unique mix of resource users, all competing for similar wildlife interests. The Chapter is the best group capable of providing a link between these various agencies, organizations, and resource users. The primary goal of the Chapter should be to enhance our ability to conserve our resources, educate people on wildlife issues, and maintain our credibility as

informational and organizational leaders. I appreciate the faith Chapter members had in me by electing me to the Board two years ago and would continue to serve the state's wildlife resources as best as I can."

## **Candidate for Executive Board Member:**

### **Cara Staab**

**Personal Data and Principle Interests:** I am a native South Dakotan, and was raised near the banks of the Big Sioux River. I left South Dakota early in my career to explore new habitats, and have lived in Arizona, California, Utah, and Washington. I gratefully and humbly returned to South Dakota in 2002, and take every opportunity I can to experience the beauty and diversity within our great state. I started hunting when I came back, and have now harvested two Black Hills elk and three turkeys. I add this to my list of favorite things to do, alongside my tried-and-true non-consumptive activities such as hiking, traveling, and birding.

**Career Positions:** I am currently a wildlife biologist with the Black Hills National Forest, and have responsibilities in both South Dakota and Wyoming. I have also worked for the Forest Service in other western states. Before entering the realm of public land management, I worked with spotted owls, desert tortoises, and other cool critters while employed by the Arizona Game & Fish Department.

**Education:** Master of Science Wildlife & Fisheries Sciences, University of Arizona (Tucson, 1995); Bachelor of Science Biology, Northern Arizona University (Flagstaff, 1990).

**Memberships and Affiliations:** I have been a member of The Wildlife Society since 1986. I have a life membership with the South Dakota Chapter, and recurring annual membership with the Wyoming Chapter. I currently serve on the SDTWS Chapter History Committee, and wish to increase my participation as Board Member. I have been an active committee member for the Southern Hills Chapter of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation since 2003. I am also a member of the South Dakota Ornithologists' Union and The Nature Conservancy.

I have been a TWS member since my freshman year of college, and have benefited greatly from the information gained and contacts made. I am now well-established in my career, and am wanting and able to make significant contributions back to the Society. I hope you will grant me the opportunity.

### **Chad T. Switzer**

**Personal Data:** Born and raised on a small farm/cow-calf operation in northeast Nebraska. Moved to South Dakota in 2002. Married to wife Rachel and together have two daughters (Hailey & Megan) and one son (Josh) and a black lab named Sammy.

**Education:** Bachelor of Science. Wildlife Management, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE, 1996.

**Present Position:** Habitat Biologist, South Dakota Department of Game, Fish & Parks—Huron Office (2002-Present). Most recently worked as a Wildlife Biologist II with Nebraska Game & Parks Commission—North Platte Office (1999-2002).

**Memberships & Affiliations:** SD Chapter of The Wildlife Society since 2002, Ducks Unlimited and

Pheasants Forever.

Principal Interests: Personal interests include hunting, fishing, all sports, any outdoor activities, spending time with family, and my hobby of iron artwork. Professional interests include habitat planning and management on private and public lands, upland game and waterfowl management and South Dakota wetland/grassland issues.

SDTWS Views: Provide guidance to ensure SDTWS achieves its goals and objectives. SDTWS is a crucial association that must stay involved with resource issues of South Dakota and the nation, provide communication links between professionals and maybe most importantly, educate the general public on the mission of SDTWS. Serving as the chairperson for the Membership Standing Committee, my goal is to continue recruitment and find innovative ways to ensure the enrollment of wildlife professionals into the state chapter. Representing SDTWS on the Northern Great Plains Working Group, my goal is to provide the best professional input regarding Farm Bill issues and opportunities, along with other topics pertaining to the conservation of wildlife on private lands.

## SDTWS AWARD NOMINATIONS

The Awards Committee is currently soliciting nominations for the 2007 awards. The awards include the Wildlife Professional of the Year Award, Citizen's Wildlife Award, Master of Science scholarship, and PhD scholarship for the 2006-2007 academic year.

Each year SDTWS recognizes one wildlife professional and one state citizen for their outstanding contribution in the arena of wildlife resource management. If you would like to nominate an individual for either of these awards, please submit a letter of nomination to the Awards Committee no later than February 3, 2007. This is a great opportunity to recognize those who go the extra mile in their stewardship of South Dakota's wildlife resources.

The SDTWS also recognizes academic and/or research excellence achieved by graduate students. This year there will be one (1) MS scholarship and (1) PhD scholarship for the 2006-2007 academic year. If you would like to nominate a student for this award, please complete and submit the nomination form to the Awards Committee **no later than February 3, 2007**.

Information regarding the nomination process for these awards and the Student Award Nomination Form can be found on the SDTWS webpage at <http://www.sdwildlife.org/awards.htm>. If you have any questions regarding the nomination process or the formulation of nomination letters, please contact Nora Kohlenberg.

SDTWS Awards Committee  
c/o Nora Kohlenberg  
523 E. Capitol Ave.  
Pierre, SD 57501  
Phone: (605) 773-4675  
Fax: (605) 773-6245  
e-mail: Nora.Kohlenberg@state.sd.us

**South Dakota Chapter of the Wildlife Society—Absentee Ballot**  
**For President Elect:**  
**(Vote for One)**

**Kent C. (KC) Jensen**

\_\_\_\_\_ **(Write in)**

**For Secretary—Treasurer:**  
**(Vote for One)**

**Art Smith**

\_\_\_\_\_ **(Write in)**

**For Executive Board Member:**  
**(Vote for One)**

**Cara Staab**

**Chad Switzer**

\_\_\_\_\_ **(Write in)**

If you are unable to attend the South Dakota Chapter of the Wildlife Society, 2006 Meeting, please complete this absentee ballot and return it by February 28, 2007 to Kurt Forman, 419 Hunters Ridge, Brookings SD 57006

# SDTWS Responds to TWS Call for Comments on 2007 Farm Bill

**Editor's Note:** The Wildlife Society requested comments on a draft position statement on recommendations for the 2007 Farm Bill that will be written by the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress. Below is the letter sent by SDTWS chapter president Bridgette Flanders-Wanner to Laura Bies, the TWS associate director of government affairs. The comments were a collaborative effort of Bridgette and SDTWS members Art Smith, Chad Switzer and Kurt Forman.

Dear Laura:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment regarding The Wildlife Society's *Recommendations for the 2007 Farm Bill*. The South Dakota Chapter of the Wildlife Society is encouraged by the proactive stance the national chapter has taken in regard to preparations for the 2007 Farm Bill. We offer up our comments in an effort to help the TWS put forth clear and concise comments that will effectively help ensure a wildlife-friendly 2007 Farm Bill attractive to our nation's landowners. We suggest that comments be fairly program specific, to mirror the typical manner in which legislation is written. Our recommendations for TWS consideration to include in its position statement are as follows:

## **Recommendation # 1 Conservation Compliance**

Wetland Compliance (Swampbuster) should be retained with no changes.

Sodbuster should be replaced with a "Sodsaver" provision that would require native grazing lands without previous cropping history that is converted after the passage of the 2002 Farm Bill to be ineligible for any USDA program funds or benefits. These would include but not limited to, conservation, commodity, crop insurance or energy payments.

## **Recommendation # 2 Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)**

1. CRP should be reauthorized and the acreage cap should be expanded to 45 million acres (originally authorized by the 1985 Farm Bill).

2. State Habitat Technical Teams, made up of wildlife professionals, should be utilized in CRP administrative and management decisions.

3. Reauthorize the Farmable Wetlands Program language as written in the 2002 Farm Bill.

4. Create language that will direct USDA to create options for both general and Continuous options for CRP.

5. Make CRP and all conservation payment exempt from self-employment tax (this will also likely need to be done in the tax code as well).

6. Wildlife remains a co-equal object with soil and water quality for CRP.

Cropping history requirements for CRP found in the 2002 Farm Bill should be retained. This will prohibit producers from farming their way into CRP.

## **Recommendation # 3 Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)**

1 Reauthorize WRP in 2007 Farm Bill and expand the program to enroll a minimum 250,000 acres annually.

2 Base easement values for WRP on fair market values for the loss of crop production on the land enrolled in WRP.

## **Recommendation # 4 Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)**

1 Reauthorize EQIP at current funding level.

- 2 Assign co-equal status of fish and wildlife habitat with soil and water.

**Recommendation # 5 Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)**

- 1 Reauthorize and expand WHIP funding to \$100 million annually.
- 2 Provide language that will allow annual incentive payments for practices that will help meet special habitat needs identified in the State Wildlife Action Plans.
- 3

**Recommendation # 6 Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)**

- 1 Reauthorize GRP and expand cap to 10 million acres for the duration of the 2007 Farm Bill.
- 2 Direct USDA to place a higher emphasis on 30-year and permanent easements.

**Recommendation # 7 Conservation Security Program (CSP)**

- 1 Continue CSP as long as is it complimentary to CRP, WRP, EQIP, WHIP and GRP and doesn't take funding away from these other programs.
- 2 Require fish and wildlife habitat management as a criterion for participation at the Tier 2 level.

**Recommendation # 8 Biofuels**

- 1 Bio-fuel efforts should be promoted, but in a manner that results in a "no net loss" of existing wildlife habitat, soil and water quality. For that reason, we recommend that existing cropland be targeted for bio-fuels production and not make current CRP acres available for bio-fuel production.
- 2 Harvest for bio-fuels should be done in a manner (frequency, stubble height and seeding rates & mixtures) that promotes sustainability of the bio-fuels feedstock and wildlife benefits. Ideally, no more than 50% of a given field should be harvested in a year; harvest should be done after the primary nesting season; and leave a stubble height of no less than 12 inches.
- 3 Species with invasive properties should not be used.

It is our belief that the above recommendations would give TWS recommendations that would have the most impact on ensuring a wildlife-friendly Farm Bill in 2007.

While we recognize that TWS has spent significant time putting together recommendations in their current draft, we suggest **all recommendations offered in draft TWS white paper be discarded due to ambiguities, duplications and errors presented in the draft recommendations.** Namely, issues of concern to us contained with the current draft TWS position statement include:

Page 1, first paragraph, fourth sentence, it states: "Specifically, the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP)..." Collectively, CREP, CCRP are authorized through CRP, so CREP and CCRP would need to be dropped from this statement to make it accurate.

Recommendation # 2, it mentions that a systematic monitoring program for conservation benefits is needed, focused on actual conservation benefits is needed, focused on actual conservation benefits, not on acres treated or dollars spend." While this would be an ideal situation, this suggestion would be difficult to adopt legislatively and we suggest that recommendation # 2 be dropped because it would be difficult to secure new funding for such an endeavor without causing cuts for some other conservation program. Dollars will be tight in this next Farm Bill cycle, so any new monitoring programs will likely come as a result of cutting programs for habitat.

Recommendation # 3, states that "The Conservation Effects Assessment program should be continued and expanded to specifically address fish and wildlife benefits." We suggest that this recommendation

be deleted because CEAP is not a program in the 2002 Farm Bill but a partnership started in 2003 to look at conservation benefits, which already includes assessments of fish and wildlife habitat (through the efforts put forth by Charlie Rewa, NRCS and Ray Evans of Eco Associates).

Recommendation # 4 is written in a manner that would be difficult to write legislatively, and even more difficult to implement consistently. For that reason, we suggest it be dropped.

Recommendation # 5 addresses strengthening sod busting, however the supporting information in TWS draft white paper incorrectly mentions CRP as a factor driving grassland conversion. The 2002 Farm Bill put date certain requirements to prevent sod busted lands from being enrolled in CRP. We suggest that Sodsaver replace Sodbuster as written in our recommendation # 1.

A recommendation for maintaining existing Swampbuster provisions was omitted in the TWS draft.

Recommendation # 7 should be reworded to state: “WRP should be reauthorized and expanded.” Easement options are already available in GRP and WRP, so why is it necessary to add this to CRP as well?

Recommendation # 8 is not program specific but reflected in the Field Office Technical Guides. We recommend deleting this one as well.

Recommendation # 9 is already being done administratively through program guidelines and in scoring process like the EBI for CRP, so we recommend deleting this statement.

Recommendation # 10 is fine as is and is included in our suggested recommendation # 6.

Recommendation # 11 has already been expanded to include landowners not in agriculture production, so the statement isn't necessary.

Recommendation # 12 is not necessary if WHIP funding is expanded as per our recommendation # 5.

Recommendation #13 WRP already has an enhancement option and WHIP and EQIP have local match/partnerships already, so this is not necessary as well.

Recommendations #14 & 15 are fine in concept, but difficult to legislate/monitor.

Recommendation #16 sounds like State Technical Committee meetings which are already being conducted quarterly in most states.

Recommendation #17 is fine in concept, but is already being done in some states informally through ranking processes for WHIP, EQIP and other programs, thus is not necessary in statute.

The South Dakota Chapter is thankful for this opportunity to offer comments and hope you will take our comments into consideration. If you have any questions, please feel to contact President Bridgette Flanders-Wanner at 605-280-4775.

Sincerely,

Bridgette Flanders-Wanner  
President, SD Chapter of the Wildlife Society

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If you have an announcement, information item, or committee activity report that should be included in the next edition of *A Prairie Voice*, or if your address has changed, send the information to: Greg Pavelka at Gregory.a.pavelka@usace.army.mil, or call 402-667-2581, or fax the information in at 402-667-2588.

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The SDTWS List Serve is a one-way, non-conversational list serve used on an infrequent basis solely to inform members about important conservation issues and legislation. Due to the sensitive nature of some list serve content, we strongly advise that you provide us with a home e-mail address.

SDTWS' newsletter, The Prairie Voice, is all-electronic. Therefore, an e-mail address must be provided above in order to receive it (paper copies will be provided only to individuals who do not have a computer, internet access, or an e-mail address).

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