



CONSERVATION *Showcase*

Flooded Land to be Restored Through Conservation

In 1884, Alfred Briggs settled a quaint piece of land next to the river. Here, he and his family would have bountiful water and wildlife.

Today, Bill Taunton owns this property and is working continuously to carry on the philosophy of the original homesteader.

Taunton purchased the Sanborn County land in 1979 and has since created a successful farm, ranch, and melon operation along with an area for family and friends to hunt. He believes that conservation is a way of giving back to the land for everything



it's given him.

“If we don't have conservation, we won't have anything left for our future,” Taunton said. “It's important for the air, water, and environment. I wonder if sometimes we appreciate it as much as we should.”

Two years ago, Taunton heard about a new program being offered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). This project will acquire a conservation easement along a major South Dakota river system under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

(ARRA). Taunton will be placing 410.7 acres of land into the easement that will protect one and a half miles of the James River floodplain.

This project will re-establish the native vegetation, restore the hydrology, and provide wildlife habitats for resident and migratory species in the prairie pothole region. Taunton, residents of Sanborn County, and downstream residents will reap the benefits of cleaner water and additional wildlife enjoyment.

Due to winter snow melt and excessive rain in 2010, the easement is





is just now becoming dry enough to work on seeding grass.

“I’ve gone 12 years without the river being out of its banks, its never been out like this for this long, usually around three to four weeks,” Taunton said. “The river bottom is the most likely place there is to put an easement once we get the water down and get it seeded.”

An adjacent project will restore 179.1 acres and create a four and one-half mile contiguous corridor of protected floodplain. Together,

these projects will restore a known travel corridor for the Topeka shiner, a federally endangered fish. These projects are especially important because they are the “missing link” in a stretch of river that connects land that is already covered by NRCS easements.

For more information on conservation options for frequently flooded land, visit www.sd.nrcs.usda.gov or contact your local NRCS staff located in the USDA Service Center.

