

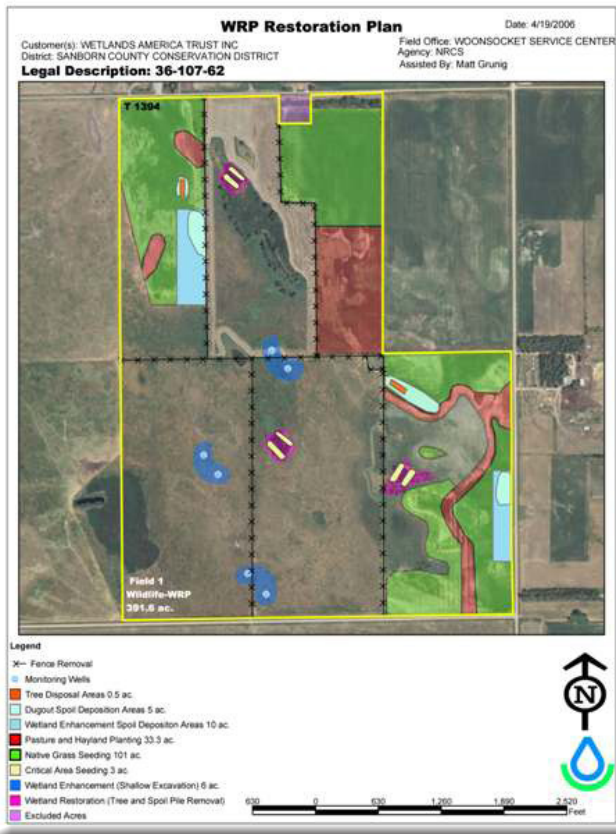


CONSERVATION *Showcase*

Landowner Uses Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) to Restore Wetland Complex

A unique partnership between Ducks Unlimited and the USDA Natural Resources has resulted in a healthier wetland complex in Sanborn County, SD.

“With more than 50 percent of the continental United States wetlands already lost and losing more at an alarming



rate of 220 acres per day,” said Bruce Reinerts, landowner and representing the local Ducks Unlimited, “The NRCS Wetland Reserve Program was an easy choice.”

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is a voluntary program offering landowners the opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands on their property. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners.

Reinert’s land, located

east of Woonsocket, is located inside of the highest duck nesting density area (greater than 100 nests per square mile) according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) thunderstorm map. The project covers 400 acres of land with 286 acres being wetland. The 114 acres of upland habitat consists of established grass and new native grass seeding that will provide the associated nesting cover.

Three wetlands were restored and one large floodplain wetland was enhanced by creating ‘potholes’ within the



wetland. By extending the length of time the wetland can hold water, the enhancement will provide essential habitat for duck broods and other waterfowl in an area where semi-permanent wetlands are relatively scarce. The planned shallow excavation slopes and extended hydro-period are anticipated to diversify wetland hydrophytes (aquatic plants) in the area. In order to determine accurate water supply for enhancements monitoring wells were installed to capture fluctuating water table data.

In WRP, landowners have the opportunity of enrolling eligible lands through permanent easements, 30-year easements, or restoration cost-share agreements. The program is offered on a continuous sign-up basis and is available

statewide. This program offers landowners an opportunity to establish, at minimal cost, long-term conservation and wildlife habitat restoration practices and protection.

“Ducks Unlimited chose the permanent easement option, which perpetually protects the prop-

erty,” said Reinert. “The permanent easement is one of the three options from which a landowner can choose.”

The NRCS goal is to achieve the greatest wetland functions and values, along with optimum wildlife habitat, on every acre enrolled in the WRP



program. Long regarded as wastelands, wetlands are now recognized as important features in the landscape that provide numerous beneficial services for people and for fish and wildlife. Some of these services, or functions, include protecting and improving water quality, providing fish and wildlife habitats, storing floodwaters, and maintaining surface water flow during dry periods.

These beneficial services, considered valuable to societies worldwide, are the result of the inherent and unique natural characteristics of wetlands.

“The WRP has allowed Ducks Unlimited and NRCS to partner up and restore marginal cropland back to productive waterfowl and wildlife habitat,” said Reinerts.

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