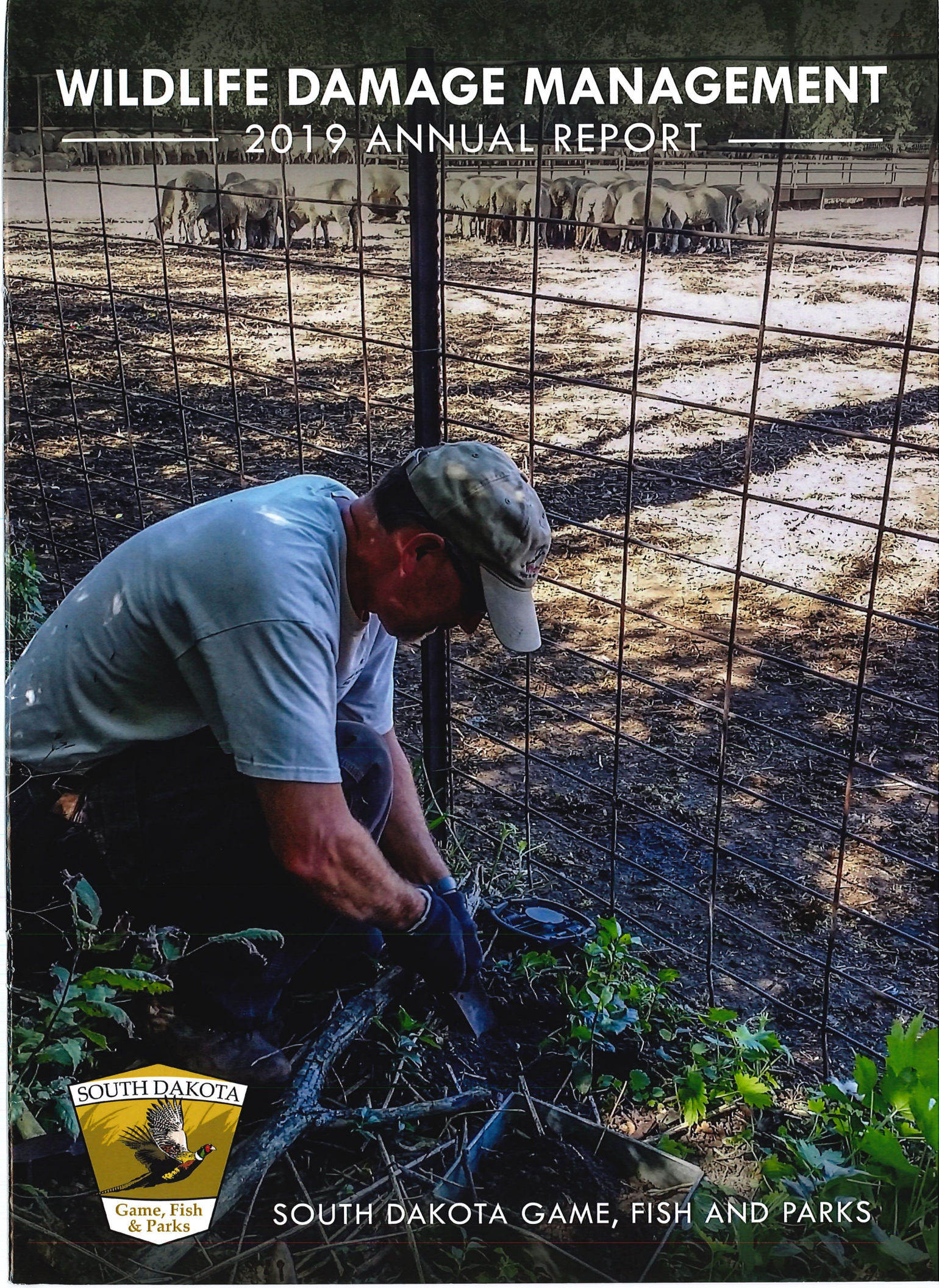
WILDLIFE DAMAGE MANAGEMENT

2019 ANNUAL REPORT



SOUTH DAKOTA GAME, FISH AND PARKS

INTRODUCTION

Greetings! Game, Fish and Park's (GFP) Wildlife Damage Management (WDM) staff has been working hard this past year to resolve wildlife damage issues that impact South Dakota's landowners and producers. Every year our dedicated professionals respond to a large number of requests for assistance from landowners and producers with all types of wildlife damage. In 2019, deer, elk and coyotes, combined with some challenging weather, created a significant workload for GFP, which also meant a record level of program expenditures. This past year, GFP spent over $3.5 million to operate the WDM programs in South Dakota and responded to nearly 2,700 requests for assistance, directly impacting almost 2,000 landowners and producers.

With more than 85 percent of South Dakota held in private ownership, partnerships with landowners and producers are critical to GFP's ability to manage the wildlife resources of this state. These private lands produce most of the wildlife and provide places for most hunting opportunities and activities to occur, which many South Dakotans and visitors enjoy every year. Working side by side with landowners and producers to resolve wildlife damage conflicts is a top priority for GFP. It is because of these important considerations that GFP operates such an active and comprehensive WDM program.

Cooperative partnerships are vital components to the success of our programs, and they would not be as successful without the assistance and cooperation of landowners, producers, predator control districts, and other state and federal agencies. By working together, our cooperative efforts impact many South Dakotans and their operations and continue to build lasting relationships.

As the agency responsible for managing the wildlife resources in South Dakota, GFP relies on a science-based approach. However, interactions with landowners and producers, as well as social tolerances and landowner concerns, all play an integral role in wildlife management and the delivery of our program services. GFP has a proven history of collaboration with landowners and producers to resolve wildlife damage concerns and remains committed to working with landowners and producers to address the impacts wildlife can have to private property into the future. I hope this summary gives you a better understanding of these important services.

Sincerely,

Keith Fisk

Wildlife Damage Program Administrator

WILDLIFE DIVISION REPORT NUMBER: 2019-08

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The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks provides sustainable outdoor recreational opportunities through responsible management of our state's parks, fisheries and wildlife by fostering partnerships, cultivating stewardship and safely connecting people with the outdoors.

HISTORY OF WILDLIFE DAMAGE MANAGEMENT IN SOUTH DAKOTA

South Dakota has a very diverse landscape and land use varies greatly across the state. This diversity, as well as local wildlife populations, weather conditions, changes to local habitat, social tolerances, and stakeholder feedback all help determine the services the Wildlife Damage Management (WDM) program offer. Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) operates a multi-faceted WDM program designed to address human-wildlife conflicts involving most species of wildlife that occur throughout South Dakota.

ANIMAL DAMAGE CONTROL (ADC)

Initially, GFP operated only the Animal Damage Control (ADC) program, which was mandated by state law in 1939. This program was then more formalized in 1974 by the South Dakota Legislature. The passage of this legislation established the program and funding which allowed GFP to employ personnel to control coyotes, fox, prairie dogs, and other wild animals injurious to landowners. This legislation developed a system to fund the program wherein state law provided for an assessment to each county based upon livestock numbers (i.e. cattle and sheep) located within the county. While the assessment amount is generated using the numbers of livestock, all taxpayers within a county contribute. This law also mandated that GFP match those county monies on a 1:1 basis initially, and beginning in 1999 the GFP match increased to a 2:1 rate. The county assessments generate approximately $300,000 and coupled with the GFP match of 2:1, another $600,000 is added.

In 2013, the South Dakota Legislature enacted legislation that added an additional $1 surcharge to most hunting

licenses. This $1 surcharge adds approximately another $300,000 for ADC program funding. During the legislative session of 2017, the South Dakota Legislature increased the transaction fee for the sale of licenses purchased online. This increase allocated another $200,000 for the program. Finally, the SD Department of Agriculture provides additional funding to the ADC program each year to assist with prairie dog control.

Initially, GFP employed a number of "Extension Trappers," who were responsible for specific work districts and responded to requests for service from South Dakota's landowners and producers. Over the years, GFP also operated an aerial predator control program to control coyotes and fox in local areas during this time period. Most requests for assistance involved problems with coyotes, fox, beaver, raccoon, and prairie dogs. Since 2000, GFP has expended over $25 million on ADC program services in South Dakota.

WILDLIFE DAMAGE MANAGEMENT (WDM)

As the populations of other wildlife species (i.e. deer, elk, turkey, and Canada geese) increased, they began to impact more South Dakota landowners and producers. The South Dakota Legislature adopted legislation in 1999 which attached a $5 surcharge to most hunting licenses in South Dakota to provide additional funding to help landowners and producers. One-half of the monies raised from this surcharge go towards hunter access programs and the other one-half is used to support the WDM program. This surcharge generates approximately $1.7 million annually, again split 50:50 between WDM and hunter access.

It has also been GFP's position to utilize the proceeds from Special Buck licenses to help fund WDM program services, which generates an additional $400,000 each year. During the legislative session of 2017, the South Dakota Legislature increased the transaction fee for the sale of licenses. This increase allocated another $200,000 for the program. Combined, the WDM portion of the program receives approximately $1.5 million annually in funding support. These funds are used to alleviate or reduce impacts to agricultural and livestock producers as a direct result from wildlife depredation. In 2001, four wildlife damage specialists (one within each administrative region) were hired to help implement the initial program services. In addition, assistance is provided by wildlife conservation officers and other field staff across the state when needed.

As a condition to receive assistance, landowners and producers are asked to sign an agreement with GFP that states they do not charge for hunting access (for the species they are requesting assistance with), and they agree to allow reasonable free hunting access to people who obtain proper permission.

WILDLIFE DAMAGE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

In 2009, these two programs (ADC and WDM) were formally consolidated and the comprehensive WDM program that GFP operates today was created. At the same time, GFP also entered into a cooperative agreement with USDA-Wildlife Services (USDA-WS) in regards to aerial predator control in South Dakota. Currently, USDA-WS is responsible for most aerial predator control operations while GFP provides predator control services via ground-control methods. Additionally, GFP provides USDA-WS with funding for the operation of a second aircraft for central and eastern South Dakota.

Under the consolidated program, extension trappers were reclassified as wildlife damage specialists and are now responsible for providing assistance to producers with all types of requests for service within their respective work district. Dependent upon their location and demand from local producers, some wildlife damage specialists work primarily with deer and Canada geese while others work primarily on predator control. Obviously, weather and local wildlife populations dictate the amount and types of services that wildlife damage staff provides.

As the demand for program services has increased, GFP has been responsive in assuring that maximum services are provided to our producers and landowners in South Dakota, within the limits of available funding. As an example, for many years GFP provided only very limited services in regards to Canada goose depredation assistance. However, as the resident Canada goose population increased in eastern South Dakota as well as the demand from producers and landowners, GFP's services increased accordingly. For example, in fiscal year 2002 GFP spent $243,857 on Canada goose depredation assistance and in fiscal year 2012, GFP spent $717,262. Again, demonstrating that as the demand for services increased, so did GFP's efforts to reduce or alleviate the corresponding crop damage.

Since 2000, GFP has spent over $24 million on resolving game species depredation (primarily deer, elk, and Canada geese) on private land. As we move forward, GFP remains committed to adapting services and programs to best meet the needs of our partners in wildlife management, South Dakota's landowners and producers.

NEW FOR 2019

- The Office of the Governor initiated an external review of GFP's WDM and ADC programs and services to evaluate effectiveness and determine possible adjustments to provide South Dakota landowners and producers more effective wildlife damage services.
- GFP received $20,000 from USDA-Wildlife Services' Aviation Training Operations Center to be utilized for the new aerial gunner position due to the safety benefits associated with this position.
- GFP hired two new staff members within the WDM program to fill two vacancies. The duty stations for these positions are Bison and Mitchell.
- GFP initiated the Nest Predator Bounty Program and Live Trap Give-Away Program which are part of Governor Noem's Second Century Initiative. These two programs were designed to engage people and youth into the outdoors and expose them to the rich tradition of trapping. A secondary benefit was to lower nest predator numbers in local areas to boost nest success of pheasants and ducks.

WILDLIFE DAMAGE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM GOALS

When someone thinks of a Wildlife Damage Specialist (WDS), several thoughts may come to mind — a GFP staff member assisting with trapping a coyote that has killed livestock; assisting with the construction of electric fence to protect growing crops from Canada goose damage; or assistance regarding deer damage to stored-feed supplies. These answers are all correct. Wildlife damage specialists play an important role within GFP and provide the people of South Dakota with many valuable services.

PRIMARY PURPOSE

With more than 85 percent of South Dakota in private ownership, private landowners play a pivotal role in wildlife management. Wildlife damage specialists cooperatively work with landowners and producers to alleviate or reduce all types of wildlife damage to private property. This includes:

- Alleviating livestock loss caused by coyotes and fox;
- Reducing damage to stored-feed supplies from deer, elk, and turkeys;
- Reducing damage to growing crops from Canada geese;
- Alleviating livestock loss and protecting the general public from mountain lions;
- Reducing damage to commercial melon growers from raccoons and deer;
- Controlling prairie dogs on lands adjacent to public land; and
- Reducing damage to crops, dams, trees, roads and other property from beaver.

Wildlife damage specialists assist landowners with a diversity of other human-wildlife conflicts such as pronghorn antelope and pheasant depredation as well as hawk and owl control to protect poultry.

There are also certain situations where wildlife damage staff assists with public safety such as the protection of levees and dikes from wildlife (during the flooding events in 2011), wildlife threats on or near airports, human-wildlife conflicts with aggressive wildlife species and other situations that arise. Some staff members also train and supervise a large number of seasonal employees and interns which provide the primary workforce for many wildlife damage management activities.

Wildlife damage specialists interact with thousands of landowners and producers each year and GFP relies on these staff members for agency communications with the citizens of South Dakota at the grass-roots level.

WILDLIFE DAMAGE SPECIALIST OF THE YEAR

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) named Brad Janecke its 2018 Wildlife Damage Specialist of the Year. Janecke is stationed in Fort Pierre and serves producers in Stanley, Jones, and Western Lyman Counties. He has been with GFP since February of 2018.

"Brad has been an invaluable addition to GFP and the Wildlife Damage Management program. His work ethic and dedication to his position have earned him a high level of respect by both his co-workers and the producers he works with," said Nathan Baker, Regional Terrestrial Resource Supervisor. GFP relies on its wildlife damage specialists to cooperatively work with landowners to address all types of wildlife damage issues and they serve an important role within the agency. "Our wildlife damage specialists play a

critical role in our efforts to work with landowners to address complex wildlife issues and build important relationships," said Keith Fisk, the program's statewide administrator. "I'm proud to have employees like Brad work in this program, exhibiting professionalism and dedication with each and every landowner interaction."

In receiving the award, Janecke was applauded for his willingness to take on additional responsibilities, such as becoming certified as an Aerial Gunner, attending professional level trapping training, and educating GFP staff on the use of thermal imaging for coyote control and livestock protection.

"The professionalism that Brad exhibits in the field and office, and his ability to communicate well with producers, members of the public, and provide professional level presentations really makes him stand out in his position. Although Brad has only worked for GFP for a little over a year and a half, he has made a tremendous positive impact with GFP and the landowners he works with," added Baker.

This award is presented annually to a Wildlife Damage Specialist who has shown exemplary public service and work ethic over the past year. Congratulations to Brad!

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Wildlife damage specialists assist with many different wildlife surveys and disease monitoring efforts that GFP conducts throughout the year. They assist with surveys such as deer classification and aerial surveys, fawn captures, pheasant brood routes, pronghorn antelope surveys, elk surveys, grouse surveys and turkey counts. They help with duck and goose banding, bobcat tagging, and walleye spawning when time allows. They are also called upon to work with other GFP staff on disease monitoring efforts such as Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD), Avian Influenza, and Tuberculosis (TB) sampling in wildlife. They assist with wildlife research projects when projects demand certain skills or personnel and play a vital role in the success of many projects. Wildlife damage specialists also provide input on recommendations for the many different seasons and licenses that South Dakota administers.

PUBLIC OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

Another important role that wildlife damage specialists play is to provide educational seminars and demonstrations to sportsmen's groups, schools, and others to promote the sport of hunting and trapping furbearers. Wildlife damage staff participates in events throughout South Dakota such as the Step-Outside Program and other GFP-sponsored public outreach events.

Wildlife damage specialists present information regarding the WDM program to county commissions, predator control districts, and appear at numerous other public meetings throughout the year. Administrators routinely interact with stakeholder groups such as the WDM Working Group, ADC Policy Advisory Committee, SD Stockgrowers, SD Sheepgrowers, SD Cattlemen, SD Ag Unity, GFP Commission, and many other organizations, policy-makers, and groups. They also coordinate management activities and operations with other partners such as USDA-WS, USDA Forest Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, South Dakota Department of Agriculture, South Dakota School and Public Lands office and other state and federal agencies as well as cooperate on wildlife damage research with South Dakota State University and USDA National Wildlife Research Center.

Program accountability is an important element for GFP, and it's critical that our constituents' needs are being met by our programs and services as well as providing accountability to the sportsmen and women who provide funding for these important programs. Over the past five years, GFP has made a considerable effort to demonstrate accountability and transparency through enhanced public communication efforts.

Staff drove more than 88,000 miles and worked more than 6,000 hours to address these requests for assistance with deer depredation. In total, GFP spent nearly $1 million to provide assistance to landowners with deer damage. By working cooperatively with these 344 landowners, wildlife damage staff were able to resolve or minimize these conflicts in most cases. Over the past 15 years, GFP has spent considerable resources (nearly $10 million) providing long-term solutions (i.e. protective stackyards and panels which permanently protect hay and stored-feed supplies) to address deer damage in many situations. These previous efforts combined with lower deer populations in many areas of eastern South Dakota, kept expenditures from reaching the record-levels of the winter of 2011 where GFP expended well over $1 million to address deer damage issues. Deer depredation and the associated conflicts will continue to affect landowners now and into the future. However, GFP is committed to cooperatively working with private landowners to implement reasonable solutions to address future deer depredation conflicts.

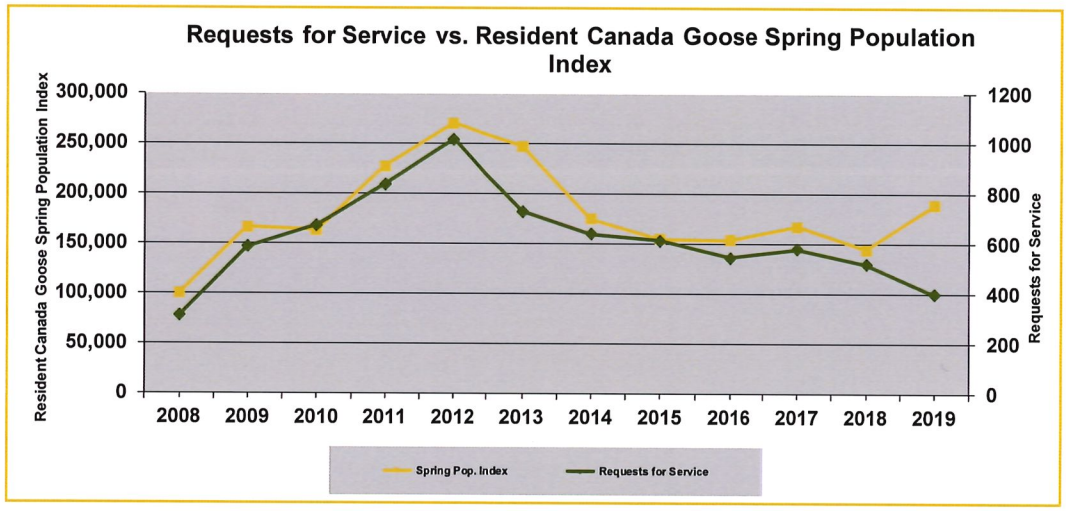
ELK

Local elk population levels and weather play an important role in the demands of the WDM program. At the same time, social acceptance levels of elk populations on the landscape also play a critical role in wildlife management. These dynamics certainly exist in the Black Hills and in several areas on the prairies of western South Dakota. GFP has worked hard to cooperatively work with landowners to reduce elk impacts to private property whenever possible.

Wildlife damage staff responded to 103 requests for service regarding elk damage, primarily in and around the Black Hills area and in Bennett County. Staff drove more than 10,000 miles and worked over 800 hours to address these landowner concerns. Many of these requests were addressed by utilizing food plot contracts or hayland contracts, where cooperating landowners are partially compensated for elk usage. There were 67 food plot and hayland contracts initiated in 2019 primarily to reduce elk depredation to growing alfalfa and other crops. There were also six protective fencing projects where GFP provided cost share for fence materials and elk cable to reduce damage to fences from crossing elk. Additionally, there were six access contracts initiated, where elk hunting access on over 14,000 acres of private property was provided for hunters as well as assistance to landowners which are experiencing elk depredation. There were 43 elk harvested by hunters on these areas. Overall, GFP spent over $298,000 for elk depredation assistance, statewide. This level of expenditure was nearly 33% higher than the previous year. Since 2000, GFP has spent more than $3.7 million working cooperatively with private landowners to address elk depredation. While many of the current damage abatement practices have proven successful over the past 20 years, elk depredation and the associated conflicts will continue to affect landowners and challenge GFP. These matters are complex and not only involve the management of elk but also include social, economic, and political dynamics as well. However, GFP has a proven history of working with private landowners and is committed to cooperatively work with private landowners to implement reasonable solutions to address future elk depredation conflicts.

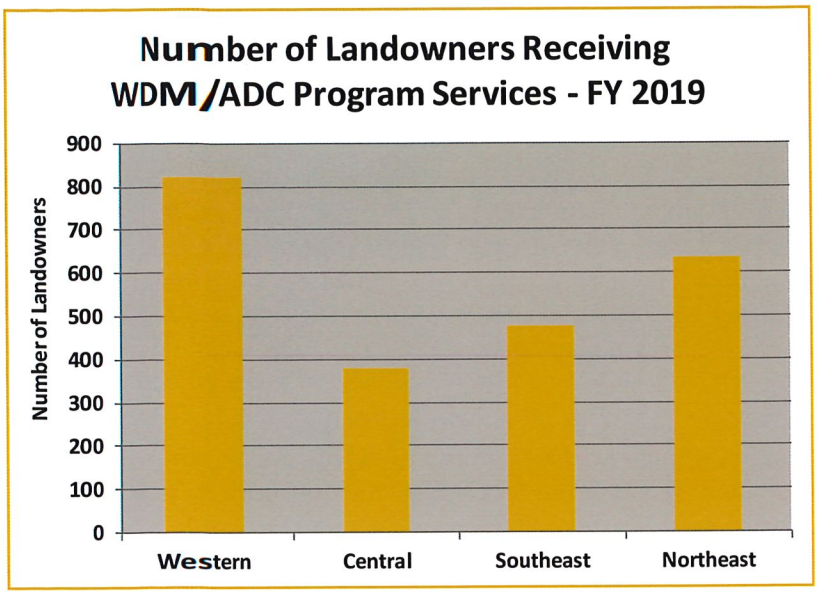
CANADA GOOSE

The spring weather in 2019 was cold and much of eastern South Dakota experienced a very late spring with very wet conditions, which delayed the planting of crops. This cold weather (including several major blizzards in April) likely resulted in lower brood sizes with fewer Canada goose goslings. Due to the lower number of goslings and extended winter, GFP responded to 399 requests for assistance which was down nearly 25% from the previous year. However, with an estimated resident Canada goose spring population index of approximately 188,000 birds, GFP still had a large workload to reduce crop damage caused from Canada geese.



There is a strong link between the resident Canada goose population and the level of Canada goose damage abatement services that GFP provides to landowners. This relationship demonstrates that when high Canada goose numbers occur, a larger number of producers are impacted. However, in 2019

many of the requests for assistance with crop damage didn't come to GFP until after July 1, so were not included in this fiscal year's report. Due to the overall lower number of birds in eastern South Dakota and the additional depredation tools that GFP has offered to landowners, such as permits to kill small numbers of Canada geese that are causing crop damage, social tolerance levels for these birds has increased over the past five to ten years. Cooperating landowners have a tool in hand that allows them to protect their crops when these birds cause damage.

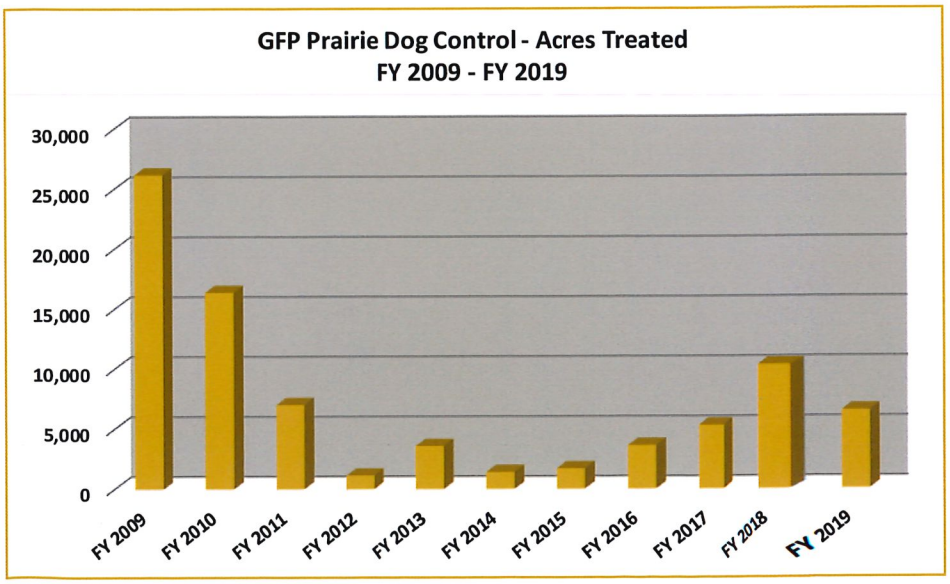


Three hundred and ninety-eight private landowners worked cooperatively with GFP to haze and remove Canada geese from areas where crop damage was occurring. These actions were authorized by GFP through the USFWS Special Canada Goose Permit. These permitted landowners took nearly 800 Canada geese during this cooperative effort. While the number of birds removed by permitted landowners does not have an impact on the overall population, this management tool is critical to successfully engage landowners and assist GFP with hazing efforts. Additionally, by having this tool available it has greatly assisted in the ability to increase the population objective to a range of 115,000 to 165,000 birds in the 2016 Canada Goose Management Plan.

While landowner permits greatly help to reduce Canada goose damage to crops in some areas, there are still many situations which require additional damage abatement techniques implemented by GFP staff to reduce crop damage. All requests for assistance involved damage to growing-season crops (primarily soybeans). GFP staff worked with 314 landowners to provide crop protection from Canada goose damage. Staff drove over 37,000 miles and worked more than 4,000 hours to respond to these concerns. Wildlife damage staff also addled 144 Canada goose nests which greatly reduced crop damage in several localized areas as well as reduced staff time and effort. GFP initiated four buffer-strip contracts which are designed to minimize goose damage to cropfields located near edges of wetlands. Overall, the total program expenditures for Canada goose depredation assistance was more than $159,000 in 2019. Since 2000, GFP has spent more than $6.2 million cooperatively working with private landowners to address Canada goose damage to growing crops.

BEAVER

Requests from producers and landowners with beaver damage were similar when compared to last year. Beaver can cause large amounts of damage in certain situations and landowners and producers rely on GFP in many cases to remove the offending animal so that the damage can be repaired. Wildlife damage staff responded to 382 requests for assistance with beaver damage where they removed a total of 997 beaver across South Dakota. Most of this work occurred in the eastern one-third of South Dakota where many riparian areas exist as well as lakes and other wetlands. Most types of beaver damage consisted of flooding crops, damage to trees used as wind-breaks for over-wintering livestock, ornamental trees near homes, and damage to roads and livestock dams. Staff assisted 316 different landowners with beaver damage concerns and drove nearly 110,000 miles and worked more than 6,300 hours to handle these problems throughout South Dakota. Total program expenditures were over $236,000.



PRAIRIE DOG

Moist conditions and abundant grass and vegetation growth kept prairie dog colonies from expanding in western South Dakota. GFP staff and hired contractors still controlled over 6,000 acres of prairie dogs that had encroached on to private land from adjacent public land. This workload was a 40% decrease from the previous year. This assistance with prairie dog encroachment from adjacent public land resulted in a program expenditure of over $143,000 of which the South Dakota Department of Agriculture provided $25,000 of assistance. GFP also works closely with federal agencies and other partners to ensure efficient and effective prairie dog control whenever possible. Prairie dog management is a controversial topic and GFP remains committed to working with landowners to address encroachment issues from public lands.

NUISANCE SPECICIES

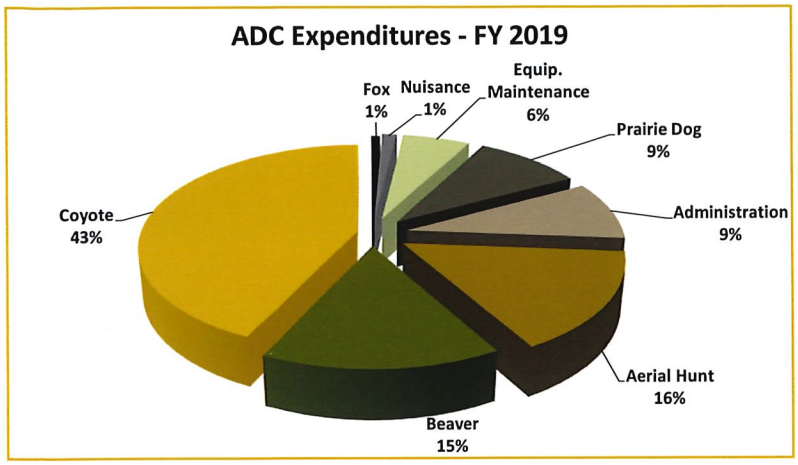
Wildlife damage staff also responded to 42 requests for assistance with nuisance species such as raccoons, badger, skunk, and mink. Most requests were handled with technical advice or loaner-traps. However, staff did provide direct control in some situations. GFP staff drove over 9,000 miles and worked over 250 hours to address these complaints.

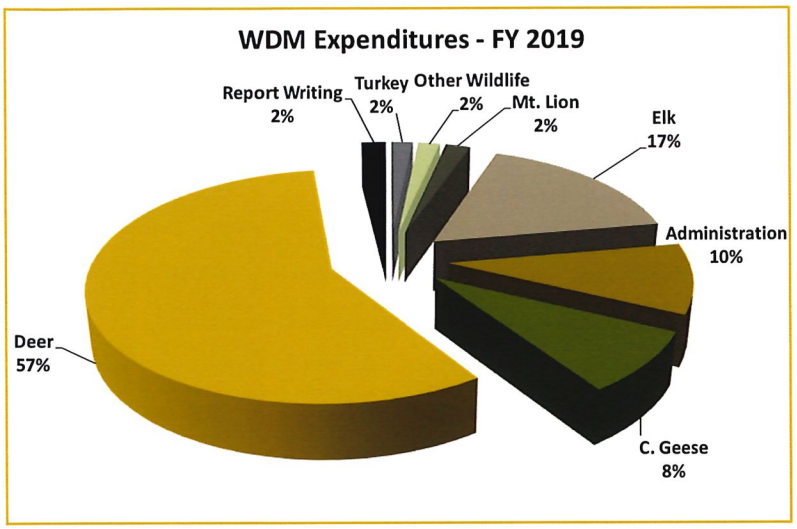
TURKEY

Wildlife damage staff responded to 18 requests for assistance involving turkey issues across South Dakota. Turkey numbers throughout South Dakota are at or below management objectives in most areas and as such, the demand for turkey depredation services was lower than previous year's efforts. GFP staff worked more than 600 hours to address these concerns. Statewide, program expenditures for staff time, mileage, materials and equipment totaled nearly $30,000.

OTHER REQUESTS

Wildlife damage staff responded to many other requests for assistance involving other wildlife species (i.e. turkey vultures, owls, black bears, raptors, etc). Additionally, wildlife damage staff responded to 20 reports of livestock loss as well as public safety threats due to mountain lions.Wildlife damage staff worked over 600 hours to address these concerns. The statewide total program expenditure for mountain lion control was more than $34,000 which is comparable to the past several years.





GFP RESPONDED TO **2,659 REQUESTS** FOR ASSISTANCE IMPACTING **1,946 LANDOWNERS AND PRODUCERS.**

PROGRAM EXPENDITURES TOTALED **$3,581,056.**

SUMMARY

Partnerships are an extremely important component of the WDM program and are critical to the program's success. Each year, GFP's wildlife damage staff works cooperatively with landowners and producers to reduce or alleviate most human-wildlife conflicts. Partnerships also exist with other state and federal agencies as well as local predator control districts and all play an important role in the work that GFP accomplishes. Overall, the ADC portion of the WDM program had a total expenditure of approximately $1.5 million, statewide. Wildlife damage staff drove more than 470,000 miles and worked more than 33,000 hours to address these 1,704 requests for assistance, which directly impacted 1,198 producers and landowners.

Overall, the statewide WDM portion of the program had a total expenditure of approximately $1.9 million. GFP staff worked more than 19,000 hours to address these 955 requests for assistance, which directly impacted 748 producers and landowners.

The WDM program also put in motion operations and administration of Governor Noem's Second Century Initiative, specifically the Nest Predator Bounty Program and the Live Trap Give-Away Program. These two programs were designed to engage people and youth in the outdoors and expose them to the rich tradition of trapping. A secondary benefit was to lower nest predator numbers in local areas to boost the nest success of pheasants and ducks.

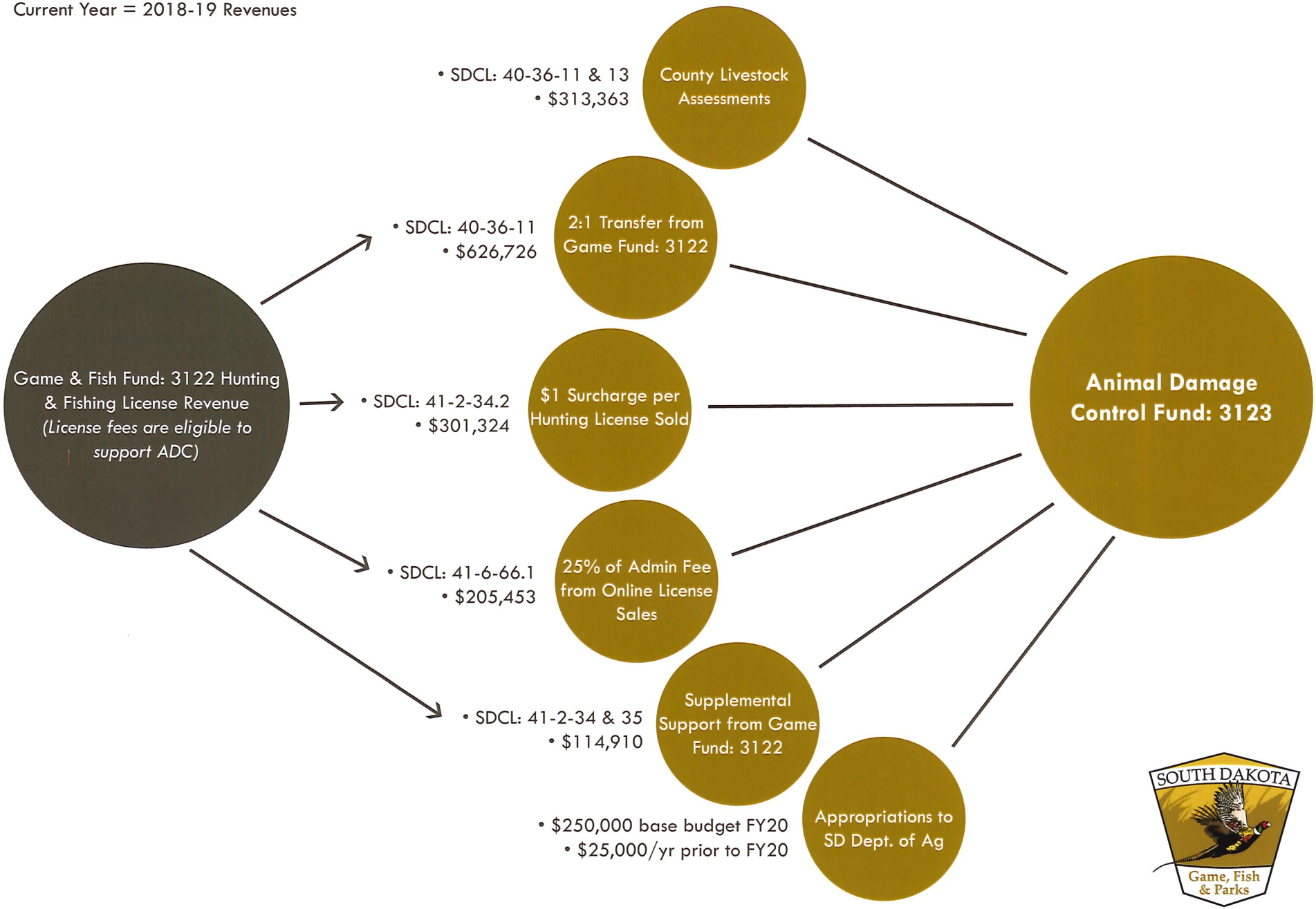
GFP gave away over 16,000 live traps for this program. The Nest Predator Bounty Program ran from April 1 through August 12. Over 3,100 participants removed 54,460 nest predators (raccoon, striped skunk, opossum, badger and red fox) primarily in eastern South Dakota. The top five counties for these predator removal efforts were: Minnehaha, Beadle, Yankton, Turner, and Grant counties and participants ranged in age from 3 years old to 92 years old. These two programs took a great deal of coordination and nearly every Division of Wildlife employee across the state assisted to make them successful.

In summary, GFP responded to a total of 2,659 requests for assistance within both program components (i.e. ADC and WDM combined) during fiscal year 2019, which directly impacted 1,946 landowners and producers in South Dakota. The total program expenditures including staff time, mileage, equipment and materials totaled $3,581,056.

SD DEPARTMENT OF GAME, FISH & PARKS

Summary of Animal Damage Control Fund Revenue Sources

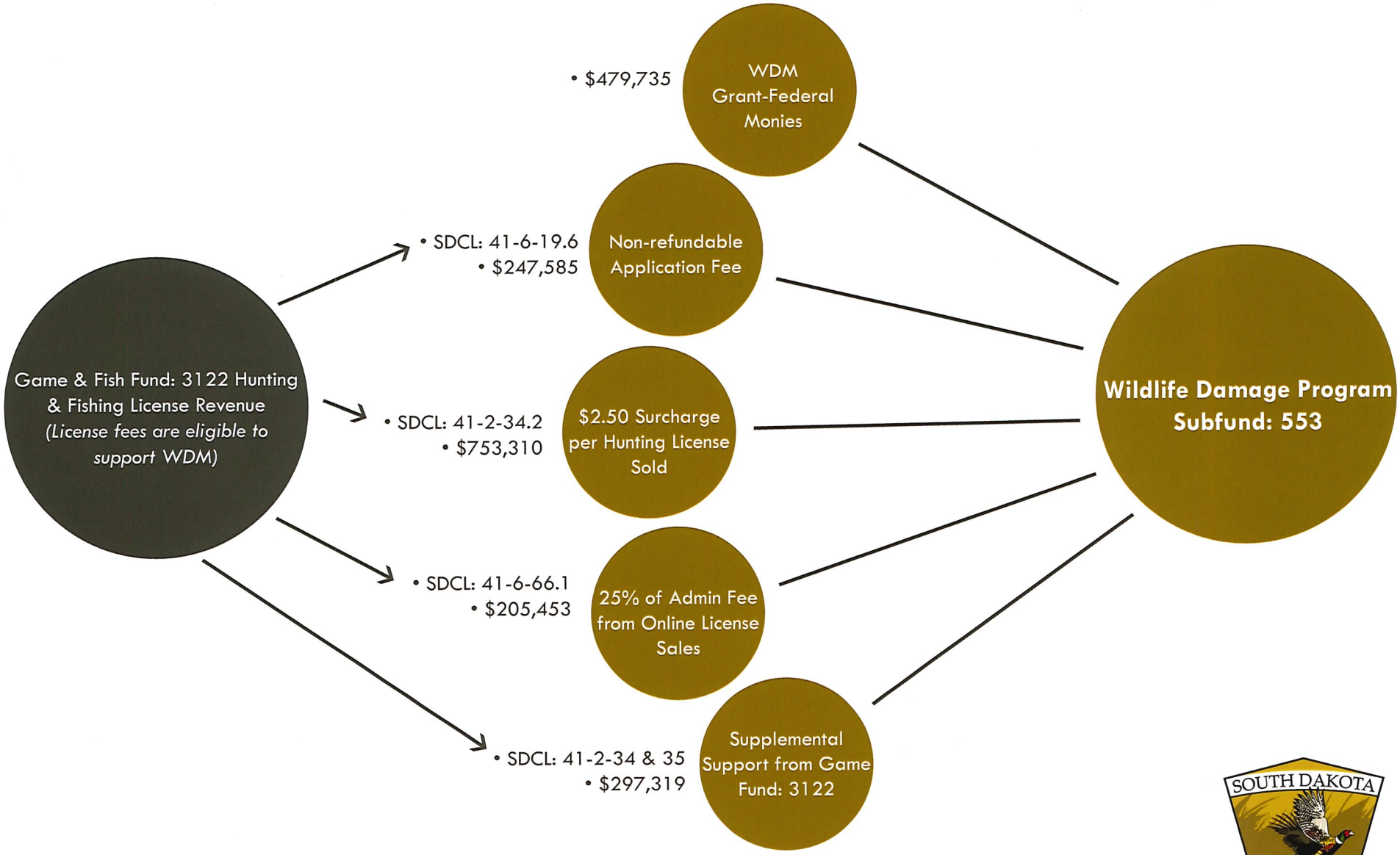
Current Year = 2018-19 Revenues



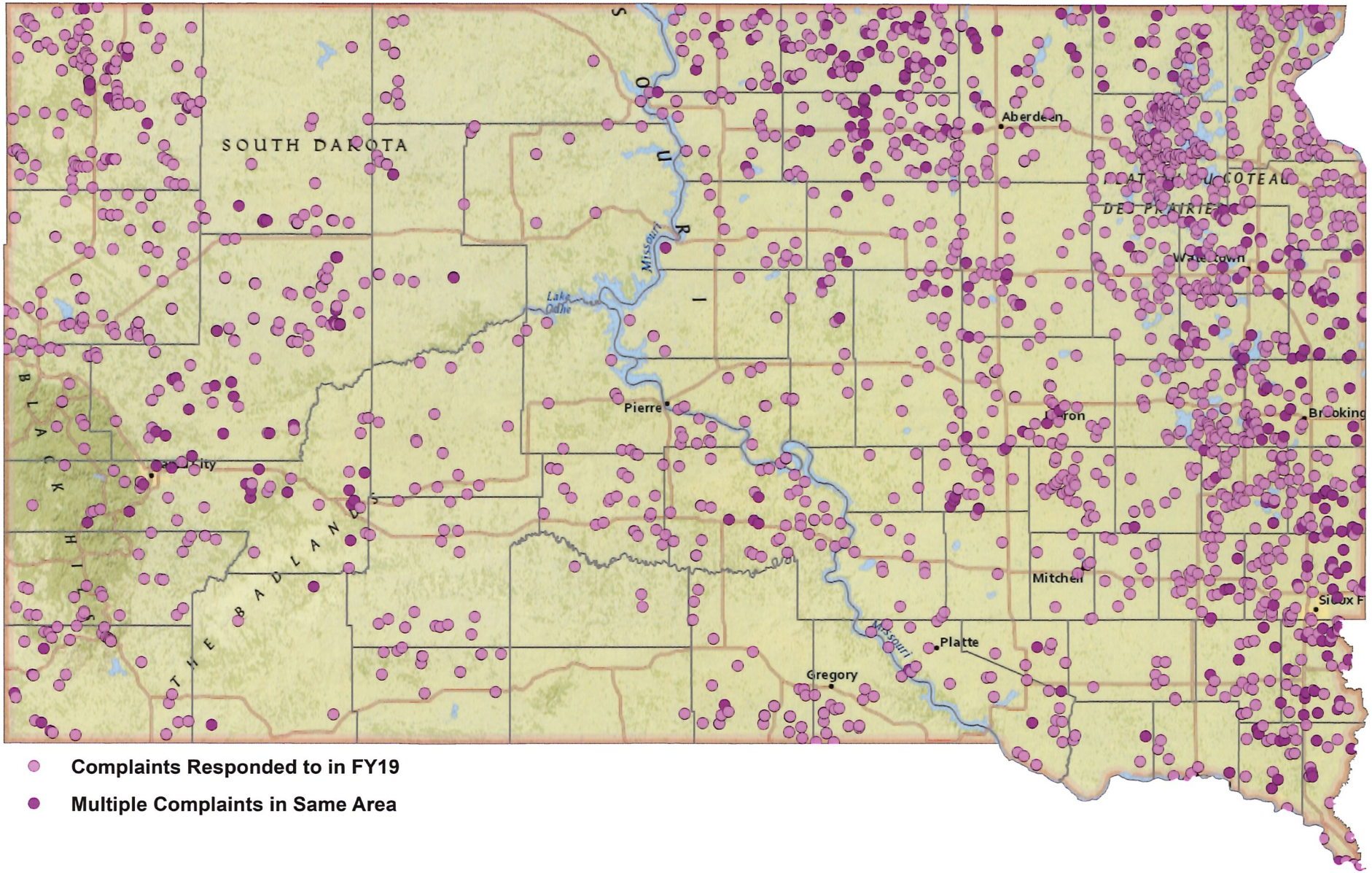
SD DEPARTMENT OF GAME, FISH & PARKS

Summary of Wildlife Damage Program Subfund Revenue Sources

Current Year = 2018-19 Revenues

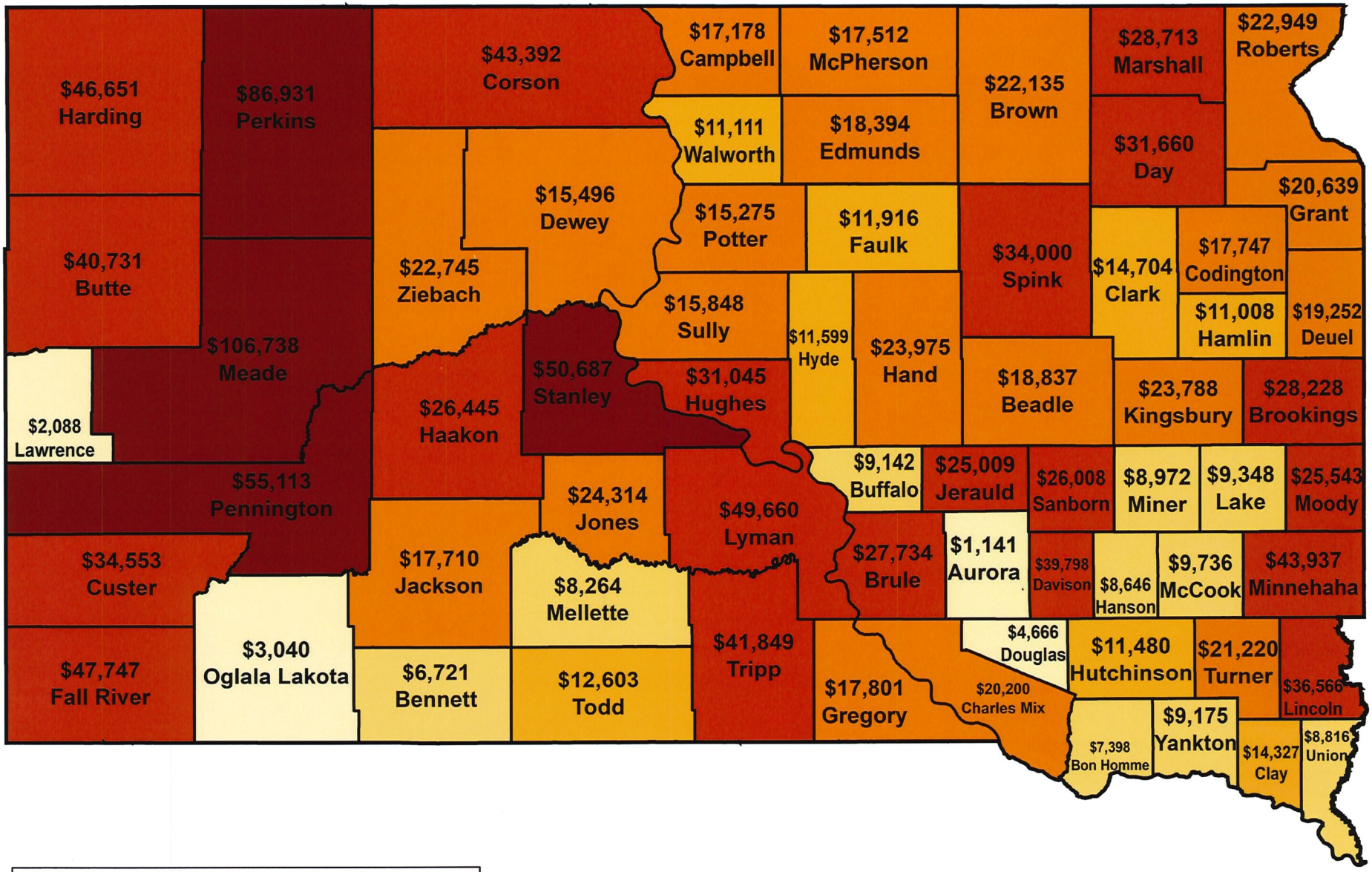


Statewide WDM & ADC Activities - FY 2019



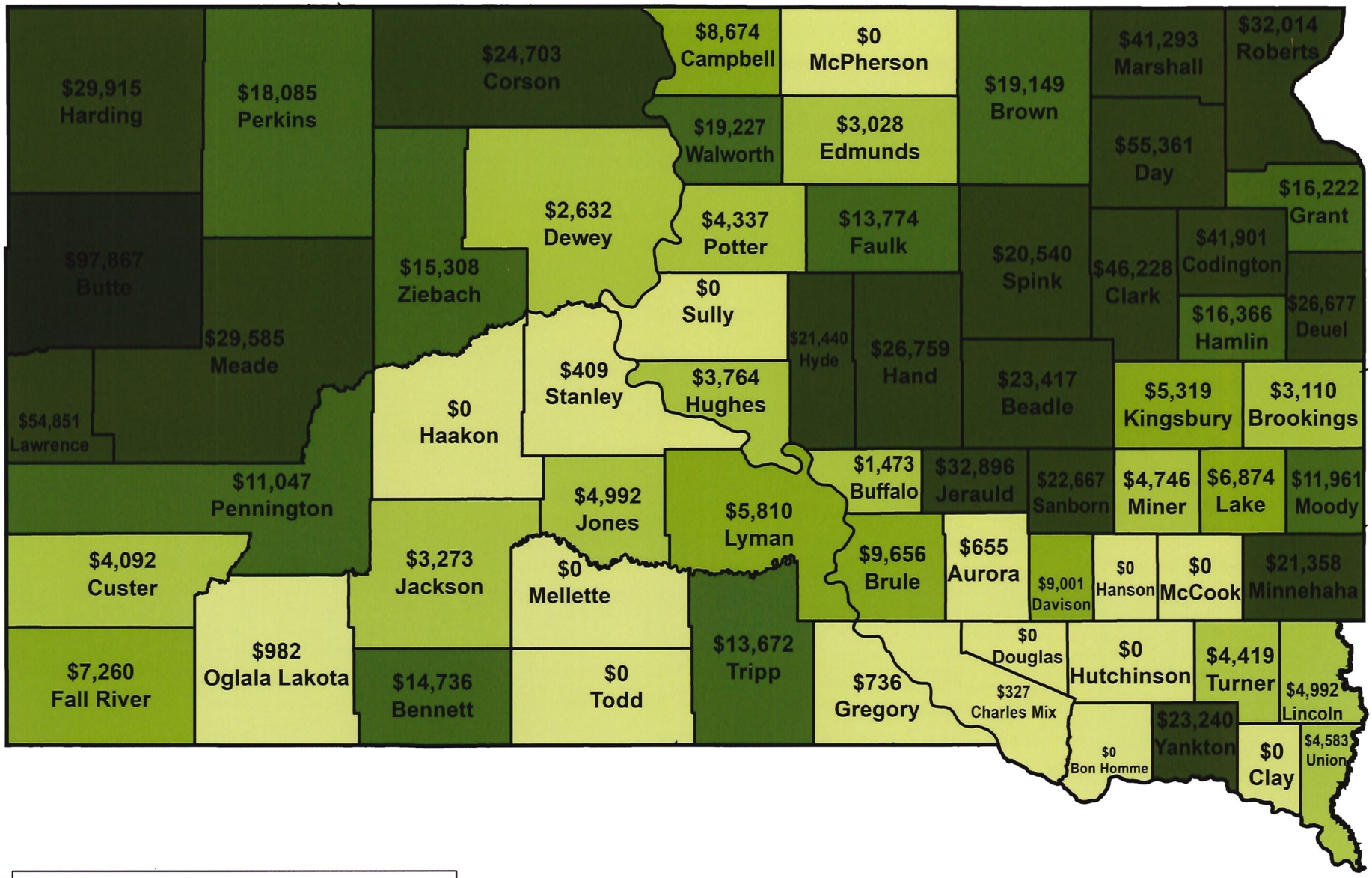
- Complaints Responded to in FY19
- Multiple Complaints in Same Area

ADC Expenditures - FY 2019



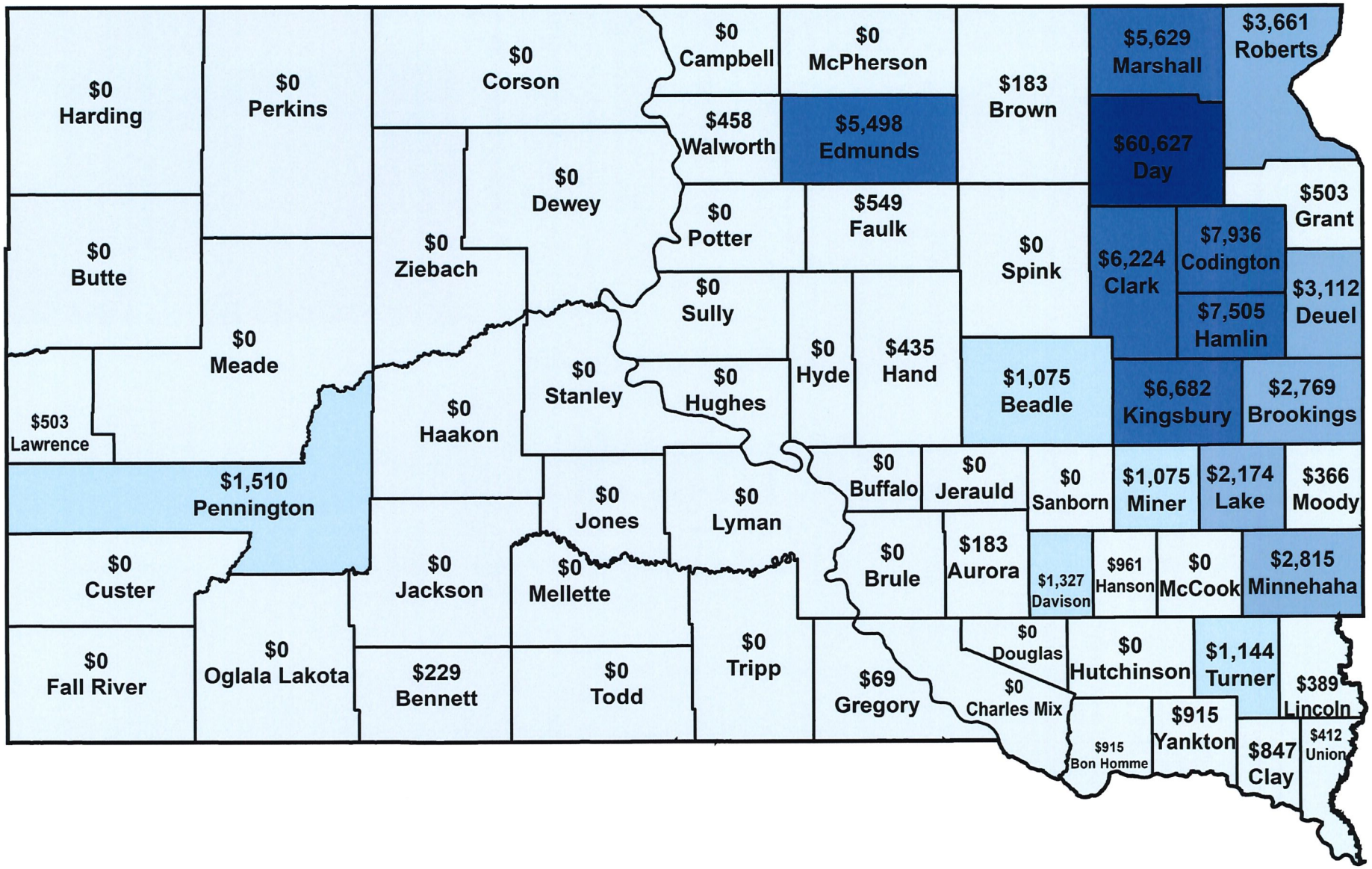
Statewide Expenditures = $1,597,654

FY 2019 - Deer Depredation Expenditures



Statewide Expenditures = $984,112

FY 2019 - Canada Goose Depredation Expenditures



Statewide Expenditures = $159,646

REGION 1 PROGRAM REPORT

Region 1 encompasses roughly the western one-third of South Dakota. The landscape is very diverse and consists of expansive rolling grasslands with buttes, the Black Hills National Forest, rugged river drainages, the Badlands National Park, as well as some croplands. Wildlife species are abundant and include most big game species, furbearers, upland game species as well as waterfowl. The region consists of 13 counties and has eight wildlife damage specialists field positions and one supervisory position.

With a large percentage of South Dakota's sheep producers occurring within this region, the primary job duties for most field staff revolve around the protection of livestock from predators. Field staff also devote significant time to beaver control and assistance with deer, elk, pronghorn and turkey depredation. Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) also works with several private contractors to control prairie dogs on private lands that have been encroached from adjacent public lands.

PREDATORS

Coyote populations in Region 1 have remained strong the past few years based upon the number of coyotes removed as well as field reports. There are large numbers of livestock operations in western South Dakota and the demand for predator control from livestock producers was significant. The total number of requests for assistance with predator control was very close to the previous year. Wildlife damage staff responded to 537 requests for assistance due to livestock losses caused from predators (i.e. coyote and fox) and worked with 280 livestock producers across the region to address these concerns. GFP has a great relationship with several predator control districts in western South Dakota and works cooperatively to address livestock loss situations.

GFP provided a total of $2,000 of cooperative funding to the Perkins County Predator Control District and the Multi-County Predator Control District (Harding, Butte, and part of Lawrence and Meade counties) for additional aerial predator control services. These funds provided additional hours of aerial predator control within these counties, which were directed by local GFP wildlife damage staff. Wildlife damage staff, in cooperation with USDA-Wildlife Services, took 3,711 coyotes and fox and drove more than 121,000 miles and worked more than 7,800 hours to address these concerns. The total cost of predator control in Region 1 was more than $283,000.

BEAVER

The demand for beaver control in 2019 was stable from 2018 in western South Dakota. Wildlife damage staff responded to 40 requests for assistance regarding beaver damage where they removed 139 beaver and assisted 35 different landowners. Requests for assistance primarily involved damage to trees used as wind-breaks to over-winter cattle and dams used for livestock watering.

NUISANCE SPECIES

GFP responded to several nuisance species (i.e. raccoon and skunk) requests for assistance and continues to maintain a large inventory of live-traps to loan out to people looking for assistance with nuisance animals. Wildlife damage staff drove over 12,000 miles and worked nearly 800 hours to address these issues. Total program expenditures were over $28,000.

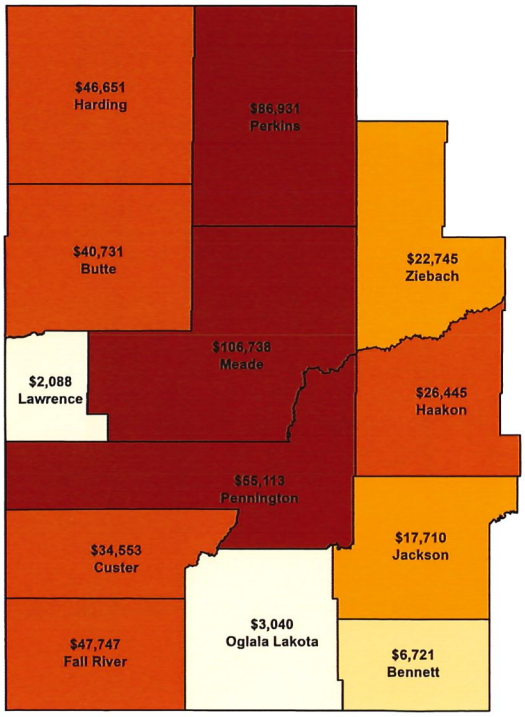
PRAIRIE DOGS

Western South Dakota experienced moist conditions during the summer and fall months which decreased the expansion of prairie dog colonies. GFP saw a large decrease from last year in regard to the number of landowners requesting assistance as well as the overall number of acres of prairie dog colonies that were controlled. GFP controlled nearly 6,000 acres of prairie dogs which was a 40 percent decrease over the previous year. Plague is still prevalent in many areas and the effects of previous control efforts have kept overall encroachment issues much lower than the record levels of the late-2000s. GFP spent over $106,000 to control prairie dog expansion with 72 different landowners where private lands were encroached from public land. The utilization of zinc-phosphide treated oats (i.e. poison oats) was the primary control technique.

ANIMAL DAMAGE CONTROL SUMMARY

Overall, the ADC portion of the WDM program had a total expenditure of $497,214 in Region 1. Wildlife damage staff drove more than 153,000 miles and worked more than 10,000 hours to address the 650 requests for assistance, which directly impacted 375 producers and landowners.

FY 2019 - ADC Expenditures



DEER

The winter during 2019 was severe in many areas of Region 1 and the demand for wildlife depredation assistance for deer and elk depredation was substantial. White-tailed deer populations continue to be at or slightly above management objectives in the northern one-half of Region 1 and slightly below in the southern one-half. These higher populations coupled with deep snow and extreme cold forced deer to move into farmyards for shelter and food. The areas along the Belle Fourche River were some of the hardest impacted areas in the state. Staff responded to 46 requests for assistance with deer damage throughout the region and worked over 1,000 hours to address these concerns. For comparison, in 2016, GFP staff only responded to 16 requests for assistance with deer damage. There were also 27 stackyard contracts implemented where stored feed supplies are permanently protected with panels or protective fencing. Several of these projects were carry-over projects from the previous severe winter. GFP spent a total of $286,000 working with 41 different landowners and producers within the region to provide deer damage assistance regarding white-tailed deer and mule deer.

One important element in reducing deer damage is the ability to harvest deer during the hunting seasons. Several hunting units that are above management objectives had higher tag allocations in an effort to reduce the white-tailed deer population in these areas.

ELK

Many elk hunting units in the Black Hills are at or near management objectives and GFP has responded by increasing antlerless license allocations to the highest levels since 2007. In a 2013 survey of landowners, GFP found that 38 percent of landowners indicated that their tolerance levels for more elk would increase if GFP enhanced its depredation abatement services. GFP responded to this survey by implementing modifications to many of its programs available to address elk damage issues and better meet the demand of landowners and producers that experience impacts from elk. The changes included increased payments for cooperative food plots, stackyards, fence protection, and offering hayland contracts for damage to hay fields. Staff responded to 103 requests for service regarding elk, primarily in and around the Black Hills area and Bennett County. Staff drove over 10,000 miles and worked over 700 hours to address these landowner concerns. Many of these requests were addressed by utilizing contracts for food plots and hayland areas that experience elk usage. There were 67 food plot contracts and hayland contracts initiated in 2019 primarily to address elk depredation to actively growing alfalfa, growing crops and hayland areas. This was higher than the past few years and largely linked to GFP's effort to better manage social tolerance as we maintain elk numbers in most hunting units. Additionally, there were eight elk access contracts initiated, where elk hunting access on nearly 15,000 acres of private property was provided for hunters (there were 43 elk harvested on these areas) as well as assistance to landowners which were experiencing elk depredation. Overall, GFP spent a total of nearly $285,000 for elk depredation assistance in Region 1.

TURKEY

Lower turkey populations in the Black Hills and most hunting units on the prairie resulted in a decreased workload regarding assistance with turkey depredation. However, turkeys still find themselves in areas where there are conflicts with people. Many of these areas are near urban areas where managing turkeys is difficult. Region 1 wildlife damage staff responded to only six requests for assistance with turkey depredation. In most cases, these requests were related to damage to stored-feed supplies or personal property which involved large concentrations of turkeys. Total program costs were just over $6,500. GFP utilized trap and relocation efforts as a management approach in several situations and relocated nine turkeys. There are large amounts of public land in the Black Hills with many areas that are suitable for release sites that will not impact private properties and allow harvest via hunting.

MOUNTAIN LION

Region 1 has one wildlife damage specialist specifically responsible for responding to calls regarding mountain lions and livestock loss as well as public safety threats. Wildlife damage staff responded to 18 calls and worked almost 600 hours with a total program cost of $33,600.

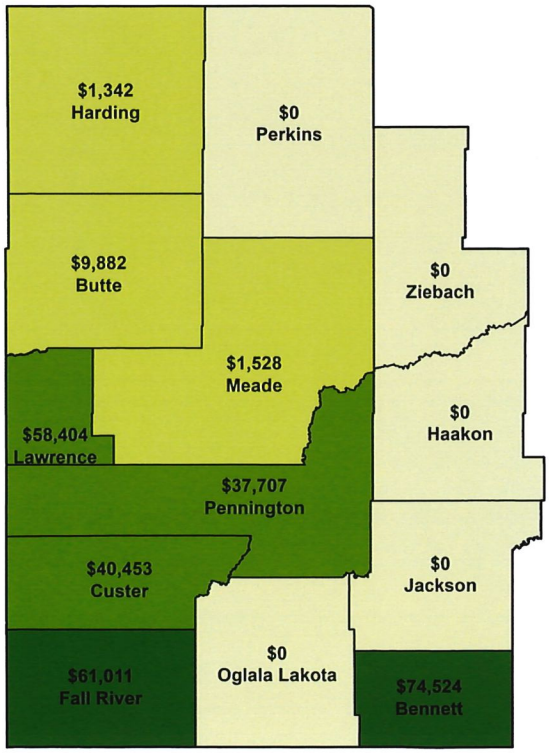
OTHER CONFLICTS

GFP also worked with the city of Rapid City to implement several management techniques regarding urban Canada geese at Canyon Lake Park and the Rapid City airport. Staff also cooperated with several municipalities around the Black Hills and Ellsworth Air Force Base to address urban deer issues.

SUMMARY

In summary, GFP responded to a total of 823 requests for assistance within the entire WDM program which directly impacted 522 landowners and producers in Region 1. The total program expenditures including staff time, mileage, equipment and materials totaled $1,172,195.

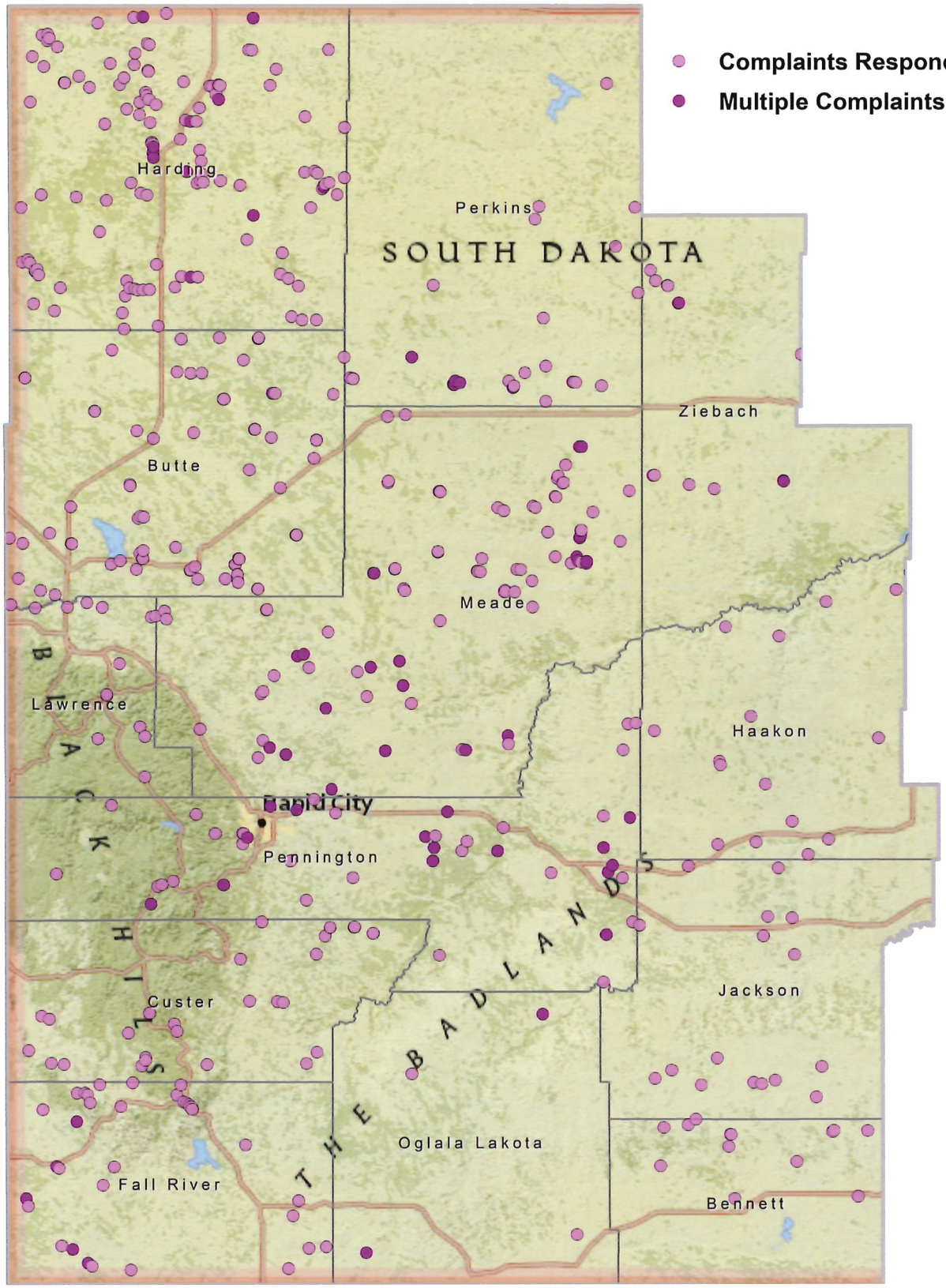
FY 2019 - Elk Depredation Expenditures



REGION 1

WILDLIFE DAMAGE MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

FY2019



REGION 2 PROGRAM REPORT

Region 2 is located within the central portion of South Dakota and consists of 20 counties, most of which border the Missouri River. The terrain varies greatly and includes rough river breaks, expansive grasslands, and significant acreages of cropland. Wildlife species are abundant and include white-tailed deer, mule deer, pronghorn, upland game, waterfowl, turkeys, furbearers, and a few elk. Region 2 has eight wildlife damage specialists field positions and one supervisory position. One staff member serves as the full-time gunner for statewide aerial predator control activities. Primary job duties for most field staff revolve around the protection of livestock from predators and assistance with deer depredation. Additionally, these duties include beaver and prairie dog control, as well as assistance with turkey, Canada geese, and elk depredation.

DEER

The winter weather during 2019 was severe with deep snow lasting until mid-April in the northern portion of Region 2. Deer populations were at or below management objectives in most areas, as a result of impacts from Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) a few years ago. Nonetheless, these harsh winter conditions congregated deer into large herds in several areas and the deer moved into farmyards for food and shelter in some areas. Wildlife damage staff responded to 55 requests for assistance dealing with white-tailed deer (48) and mule deer (7) throughout the region. The volume of requests for service was substantially more than 2018. Most requests from landowners involved the protection of stored-feed supplies. Wildlife damage staff worked more than 1,000 hours to address these concerns. Staff also initiated 12 stackyard contracts and one protective fencing contract with landowners to protect stored-feed supplies and a commercial garden. Overall, the total program expenditures were nearly $150,000 which was nearly double the previous year. Lower deer numbers across the region and previous efforts put forth in constructing protective stackyards likely kept damage to stored-feed supplies at a minimum.

PREDATORS

The coyote population in central South Dakota seemed to be lower from the previous year as wildlife damage staff responded to substantially fewer requests for service than the previous year. Nonetheless, large numbers of livestock occur throughout the region and the demand for predator control from livestock producers is present. Wildlife damage staff responded to 194 requests for assistance due to livestock loss from predators (i.e. coyote and fox). Staff worked with 165 livestock producers across the region to address these concerns. Additionally, GFP provided $1,000 of cooperative funding to the Campbell County Predator Control District for increased aerial predator control which was directed by local GFP wildlife damage staff. In cooperation with USDA-Wildlife Services, wildlife damage staff took 1,255 coyotes and fox. They drove over 78,000 miles and worked 5,089 hours to address these concerns. Total expenditures for predator control in Region 2 were over $267,000.

BEAVER

Wildlife damage staff also responded to 68 requests for assistance regarding beaver control where staff removed 168 beaver. Most beaver damage occurred near larger riparian areas and the volume of workload was similar to last year. Most calls involved damage to trees used as wind-breaks for livestock protection and damage to livestock dams. Wildlife damage staff drove almost 30,000 miles and worked 1,262 hours to address these concerns which directly impacted 56 different landowners in Region 2. Total program expenditures were over $47,000.

NUISANCE SPECIES

GFP responded to eight requests for assistance involving nuisance species (i.e. raccoon, skunk, and badger). Most requests were handled with technical assistance; however, staff did provide direct assistance with some requests. Wildlife damage staff drove a total of 2,500 miles and worked 145 hours to address these issues. Total program expenditures were over $5,300. Region 2 wildlife damage staff also controlled prairie dogs on 264 acres of private land which were encroached from adjacent public land.

Overall, the ADC portion of the WDM program had a total expenditure of $451,839 in Region 2. Wildlife damage staff drove more than 121,000 miles and worked more than 9,300 hours to address the 277 requests for assistance, which directly impacted 229 producers and landowners.

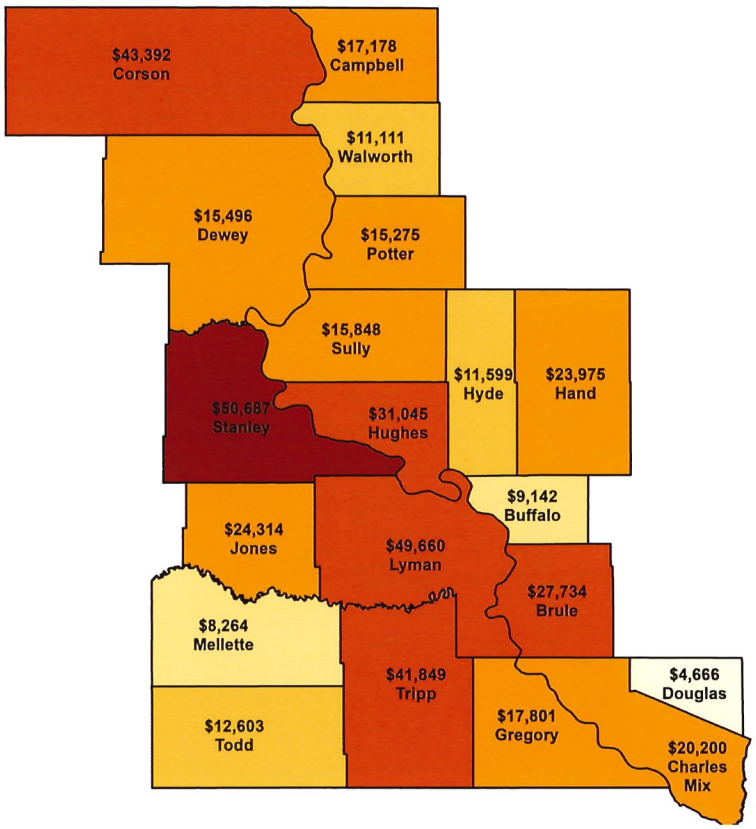
CANADA GOOSE AND TURKEY

As Canada geese and row crops continue to expand westward in South Dakota, Region 2 wildlife damage specialists have seen an increased demand for assistance over previous years. However, Region 2 wildlife damage staff only responded to a single request for assistance with Canada goose damage to growing crops. This request occurred on the eastern edge of Region 2, where more wetland and crop interspersion occur. Wildlife damage staff responded to only a handful of requests for assistance involving turkey damage to stored-feed supplies due to lower turkey numbers throughout the area.

SUMMARY

In summary, GFP responded to a total of 381 requests for assistance within the entire WDM program which directly impacted 311 landowners and producers in Region 2. The total program expenditures including staff time, mileage, and equipment and materials totaled $651,083.

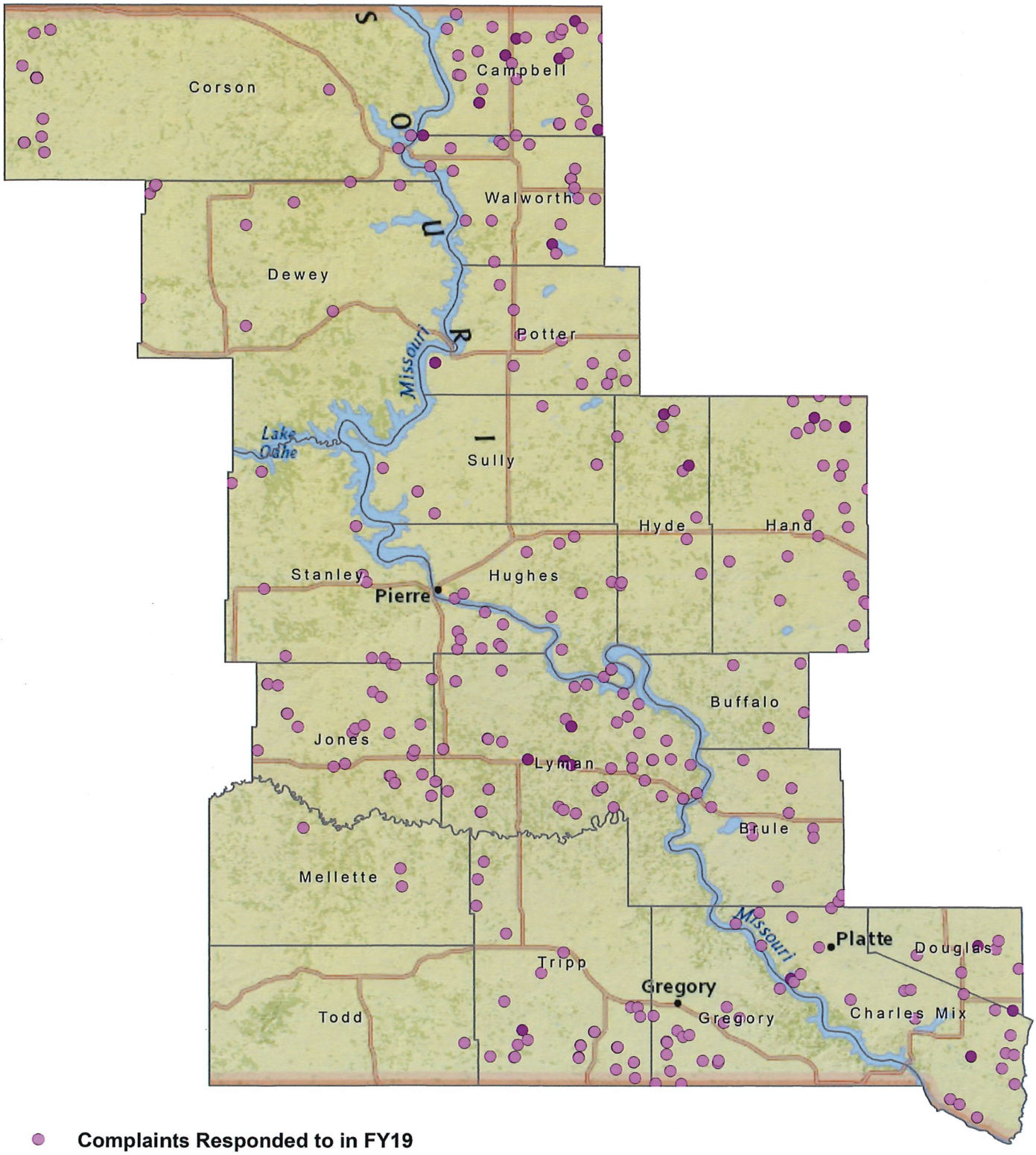
FY 2019 - ADC Expenditures



REGION 2

WILDLIFE DAMAGE MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

FY2019

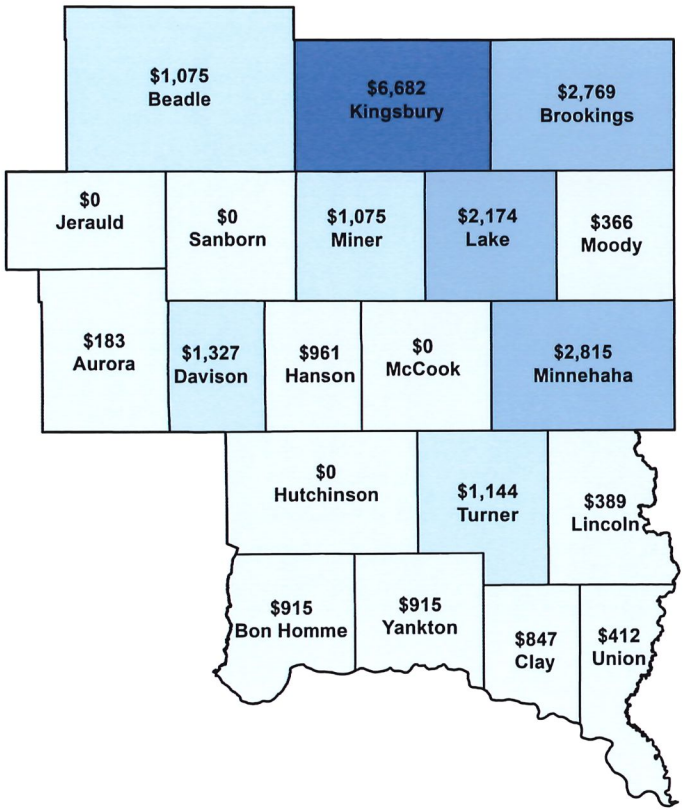


- Complaints Responded to in FY19
- Multiple Complaints in Same Area

REGION 3 PROGRAM REPORT

Region 3 represents southeastern South Dakota and includes 20 counties. The landscape here is dominated by croplands consisting of corn and soybeans, but also includes grasslands, wetlands, and the river drainages of the Big Sioux, James, and Vermillion Rivers, and is bordered to the south by the Missouri River. Wildlife species are abundant and include white-tailed deer, a few mule deer, upland game, waterfowl, furbearers, and turkeys. Regional responsibilities for responding to wildlife damage complaints fall directly on six field staff (wildlife damage specialists), with regional oversight of these programs coming from the Wildlife Manager and Terrestrial Resource Supervisor. The Wildlife Manager acts as a field manager and works between field staff and administration. Primary job duties for most field staff revolve around assistance with Canada goose crop depredation, the protection of livestock from predators, beaver control, as well as deer and turkey depredation assistance.

FY 2019 - Canada Goose Depredation Expenditures



CANADA GOOSE

The weather during the spring of 2019 was snowy and cold and several areas experienced late winter storms (in mid-April) affecting the goose nesting season. As a result, resident Canada goose numbers were lower and broods in most areas were very low because of nest failure. These conditions combined with lower commodity prices, produced a smaller number of requests for assistance from landowners compared to previous years. GFP staff worked directly with 149 landowners and responded to 165 requests for assistance regarding Canada goose damage to growing-season crops (primarily soybeans). This workload has decreased from previous years. A critical management tool that has had a substantial affect on that decrease has been the issuance of 160 landowner permits to remove small numbers of geese from specific areas of crop damage. Staff worked over 800 hours to respond to these requests. Wildlife damage staff also addled 131 Canada goose nests, which reduced crop damage in those localized areas and resulted in reduced staff time and effort that would have been spent on implementing other management tools. Overall, the total program expenditure was over $24,000 and was the second lowest in over a decade.

PREDATORS

Abundant coyote populations and large numbers of livestock created a high demand for predator control in the region. The number of requests for assistance with coyotes was lower than 2018. Staff worked with 121 livestock producers to reduce or alleviate livestock loss due to coyotes and responded to 150 requests for assistance. Wildlife damage staff, in cooperation with USDA-Wildlife Services, removed 501 coyotes and fox. Wildlife damage staff worked 3,500 hours and drove nearly 55,000 miles to address these concerns. Total program expenditures for predator control were $366,493.

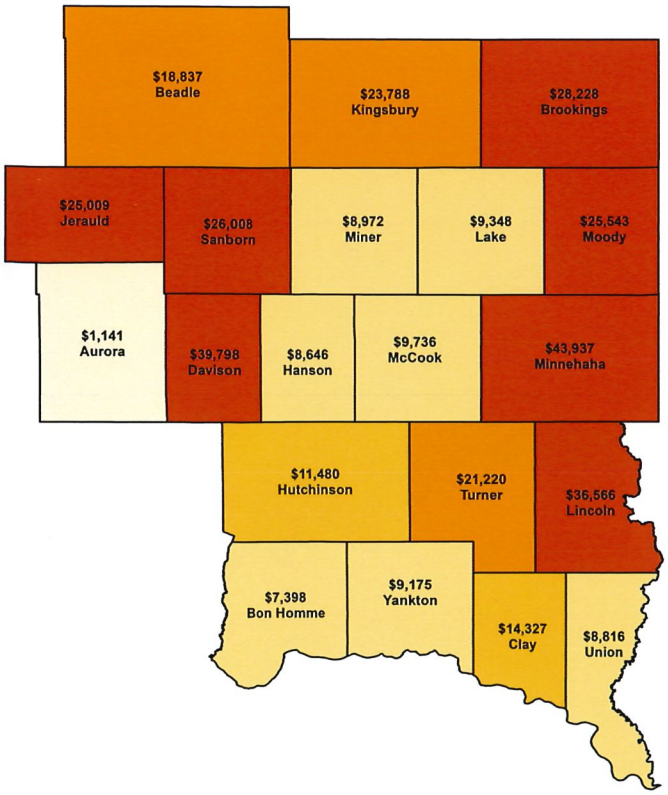
BEAVER

Wildlife damage staff saw a slight decrease in the number of requests from producers with beaver damage. As a result, staff responded to 168 requests for assistance with beaver damage and removed 414 beaver. Most types of damage consisted of flooded crops, damage to trees in planted wind-breaks or near homes, and damage to roads. Staff assisted 139 different landowners with beaver damage concerns. They drove over 43,000 miles and worked 2,626 hours to address these problems. Total program expenditures were just over $97,000.

NUISANCE SPECIES

Due to a large number of small towns and cities in southeastern South Dakota, wildlife damage staff respond to a higher number of requests for nuisance species than other parts of the state. Staff responded to 28 requests for assistance with nuisance species such as raccoons, badger, skunk, and mink. Most requests were handled with technical advice or loaner traps. However, staff did provide direct control for commercial melon producers suffering damage from raccoons as well as a few other circumstances. GFP staff drove over 6,000 miles and worked 342 hours to address these complaints. Overall, the ADC portion of the WDM program had a total expenditure of $366,493 in Region 3. Wildlife damage staff drove over 108,000 miles and worked more than 7,100 hours to address these 347 requests for assistance, which directly impacted 277 producers and landowners.

FY 2019 - ADC Expenditures



DEER

With severe winter weather in eastern South Dakota for several months a large number of landowners (72) requested service for assistance with deer damage. However, in many areas of Region 3 the deer populations are at or below management objectives. In addition, previous impacts from Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) in 2013 and 2016, lessened the number of landowners who saw deer damage to stored-feed supplies. Most of the requests were handled with loaner panels to protect stored livestock feeds and the use of hazing techniques. These services benefited 72 different landowners. Wildlife damage staff also initiated two protective fencing contracts to protect commercial tree nurseries and orchards. Along the Missouri River in the southern portion of the region, local deer populations are typically higher. GFP has worked with several producers on significant growing-season crop damage issues and have developed specific hunting access programs for them. The results have been very positive and have benefited the producers as well as the hunting community. Staff worked over 1,500 hours to address these requests for assistance with deer. Overall, the total program expenditures were $179,906, which was a substantial increase from 2018, were the expenditures were only $41,000.

OTHER CONFLICTS

Wildlife damage staff responded to several turkey issues as well as several requests for assistance involving other wildlife species. In addition, GFP assisted the city of Sioux Falls with management strategies to address several different species. Urban Canada geese cause problems and concerns in the community, and cause the biggest issues near the Sioux Falls Regional Airport. During seasonal migrations and during the winter, large numbers of geese roost and feed near the runways and are a significant safety concern. They also cause many problems at golf courses, city parks, and some private properties. GFP assisted with an overabundant deer population, and several turkey issues in several areas of the city. Staff have coordinated multiple archery hunting opportunities for deer and turkey within city limits that have been well-received in the area. Additionally, staff field receive many calls from local citizens and provide advice and technical support in these situations, as well as occasional support to the city's animal control workers and many communities within the area.

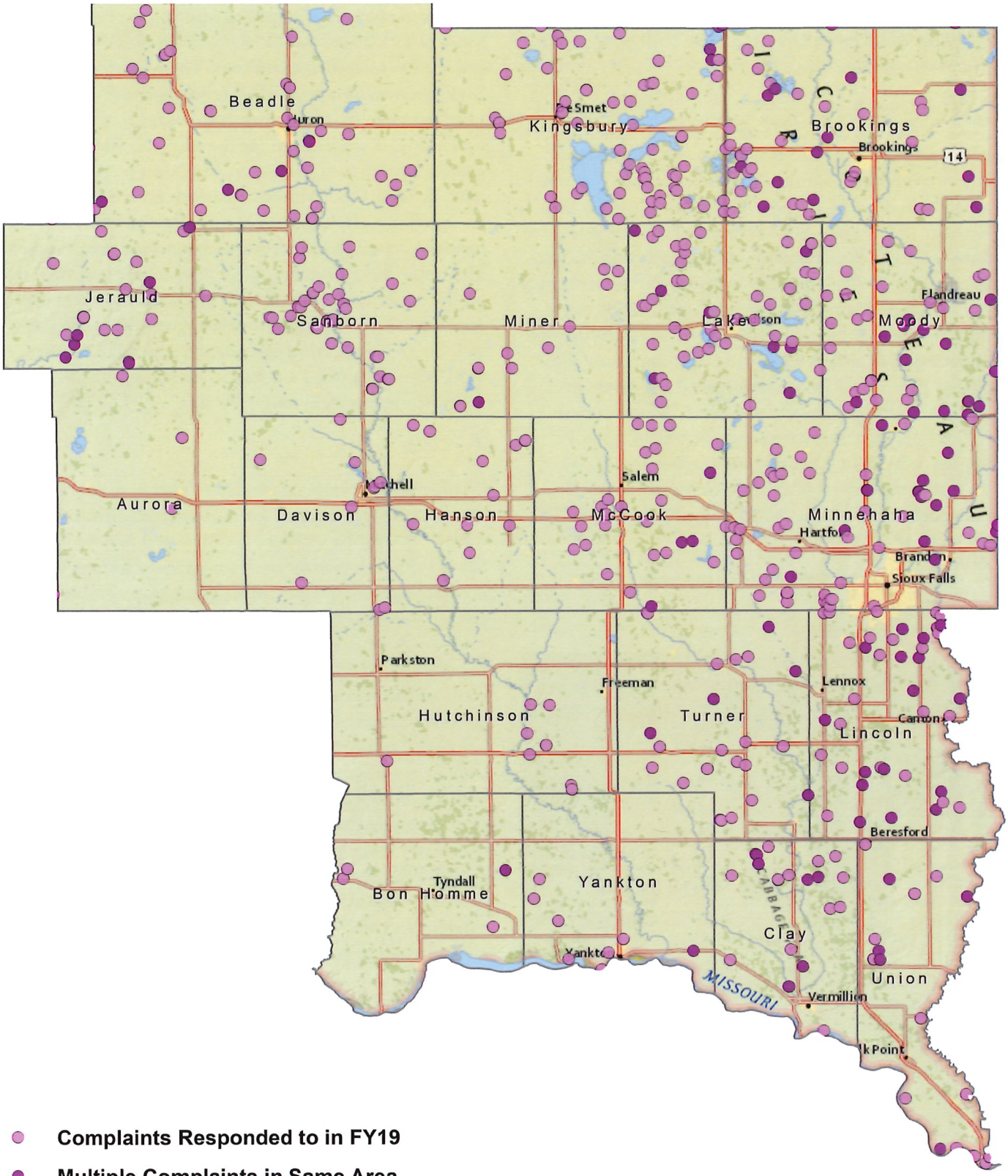
SUMMARY

In summary, GFP responded to a total of 600 requests for assistance within the entire WDM program which directly impacted 478 landowners and producers in Region 3. The total program expenditures including staff time, mileage, equipment and materials totaled $696,026.

REGION 3

WILDLIFE DAMAGE MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

FY2019



- Complaints Responded to in FY19
- Multiple Complaints in Same Area

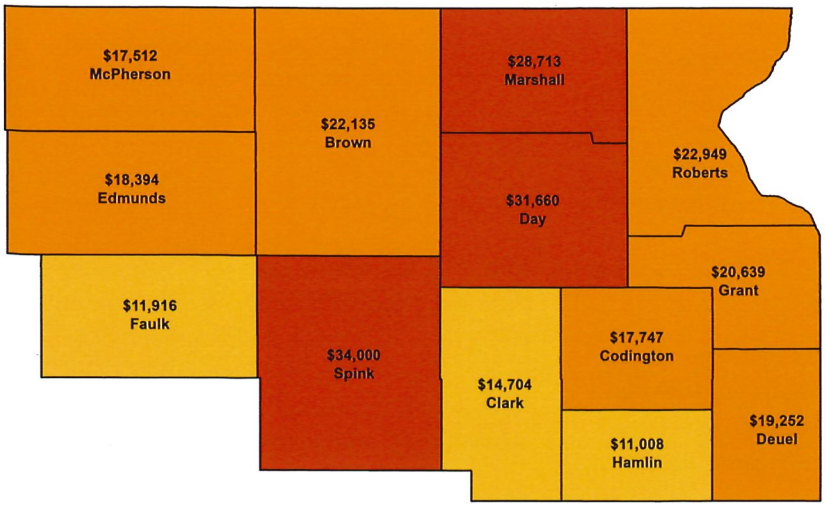
REGION 4 PROGRAM REPORT

Region 4 is located in the northeastern portion of South Dakota and consists of 13 counties. The landscape varies greatly and includes croplands, rolling grasslands, many wetlands and lakes, and river drainages, but croplands dominate the majority of the counties within Region 4. Wildlife species are abundant and include white-tailed deer, waterfowl, upland game, furbearers, and turkeys. It has six wildlife damage specialists field positions and one supervisory position. Primary job duties for most field staff revolve around the protection of livestock from predators, beaver control, and assistance with Canada goose and deer depredation.

PREDATORS

Stable coyote populations, as well as large numbers of livestock, had wildlife damage staff busy in regard to requests for assistance with coyote depredation. Staff worked with 232 livestock producers to reduce or alleviate livestock losses caused from predators and addressed 317 requests for assistance, which was a slight decrease from 2018. This region has three very active predator control districts (Edmunds, Faulk, and McPherson counties), and their cooperative efforts are a great asset regarding predator control. GFP provided $3,000 of cooperative funding to these districts for enhanced aerial predator control efforts, which were directed by local GFP wildlife damage staff. In addition to the efforts of the predator control districts, wildlife damage staff also utilized USDA-Wildlife Services and a volunteer pilot to alleviate damage to livestock via aerial predator control. As a result, wildlife damage staff in cooperation with those predator control districts, volunteer pilot, and USDA-Wildlife Services took 1,752 coyotes and fox. Wildlife damage staff worked over 3,500 hours and drove over 60,000 miles to address these concerns. Total program expenditures for predator control were $165,667 in Region 4.

FY 2019 - ADC Expenditures



BEAVER

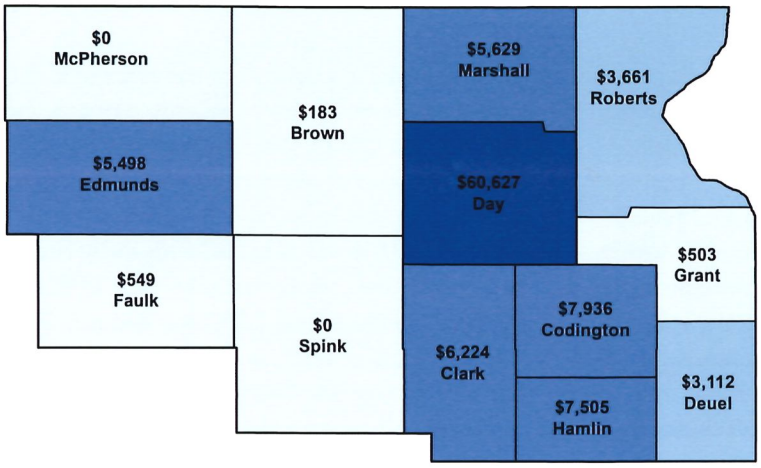
Wildlife damage staff also responded to 107 requests for assistance with beaver damage where they removed 282 beaver. This workload was similar to last year and kept staff busy. Most types of damage consisted of the flooding of crops, damage to trees in planted wind-breaks or near homes, and damage to roads. Staff assisted 87 different landowners with beaver damage concerns. They drove over 24,000 miles and worked 1,686 hours to handle these problems within the region. Total program expenditures were $62,697.

NUISANCE SPECIES

Wildlife damage staff responded to a handful of requests for assistance with nuisance species such as raccoons, badger, skunk, and mink. Most requests were handled with technical advice or loaner traps. However, staff did provide direct control in a few circumstances. GFP staff drove less than 1,000 miles and worked 50 hours to address these complaints.

Overall, the ADC portion of the WDM program had a total expenditure of $282,108 in Region 4. Wildlife damage staff drove nearly 90,000 miles and worked more than 6,000 hours to address these 430 requests for assistance, which directly impacted 317 producers and landowners.

FY 2019 - Canada Goose Depredation Expenditures



DEER

The winter weather of 2018-19 was severe with deep snow and cold temperatures throughout the region until late April. These winter conditions were the most extreme seen in this region since the record snowfall of the winter of 1996-97. The demand for assistance with deer depredation was significant as most available resources (habitat and food) throughout the region were completely covered with snow and deer formed large herds. Due to these harsh conditions, deer moved to farmyards for winter protection. Due to the high volume of requests for assistance (181) regarding deer damage to stored-feed supplies, all available GFP staff assisted with providing these services. In most cases, assistance consisted of providing protective panels, covering corn bags with secure covers, intercept feeding deer and hazing deer away from problem areas. As a way to demonstrate the severity of the harsh conditions, GFP responded to only 28 requests during the winter of 2017-18. This assistance impacted 177 different landowners. Wildlife damage staff also initiated six permanent stackyard contracts to protect stored-feed supplies. Staff worked over 5,000 hours to address these concerns with the total program expenditures of $423,595.

CANADA GOOSE

The northeast experienced a very late spring with snowy and freezing conditions into May which likely affected the nesting resident Canada geese. In the northern portions of Region 4, geese seemed to initate nesting later which liklely led to less broods and smaller clutches. Lower numbers of resident Canada geese numbers and lower commodity prices combined with a late planting season due to flooding conditions and fewer acres planted, produced a reduced number of requests for assistance from landowners overall. GFP staff responded to 233 requests for assistance regarding Canada goose damage to growing-season crops (primarily soybeans). GFP staff worked with 164 different landowners to provide crop protection from Canada goose damage; mainly through the use of electric fence and hazing techniques. Staff worked over 3,166 hours to respond to these concerns. GFP also permitted 236 landowners to haze and remove Canada geese to alleviate damage to growing crops in specific areas. GFP initiated four buffer-strip contracts which are designed to alleviate goose damage around wetland edges by creating an alternate food source or barrier to the growing crops. Overall, total program expenditures were slightly over $125,000 in this region.

OTHER CONFLICTS

Wildlife damage staff responded to eight turkey issues within Region 4 where large flocks of birds were causing damage to stored-feed supplies. These requests for assistance were handled primarily with persistent hazing techniques and utilizing hunters during the fall turkey season.

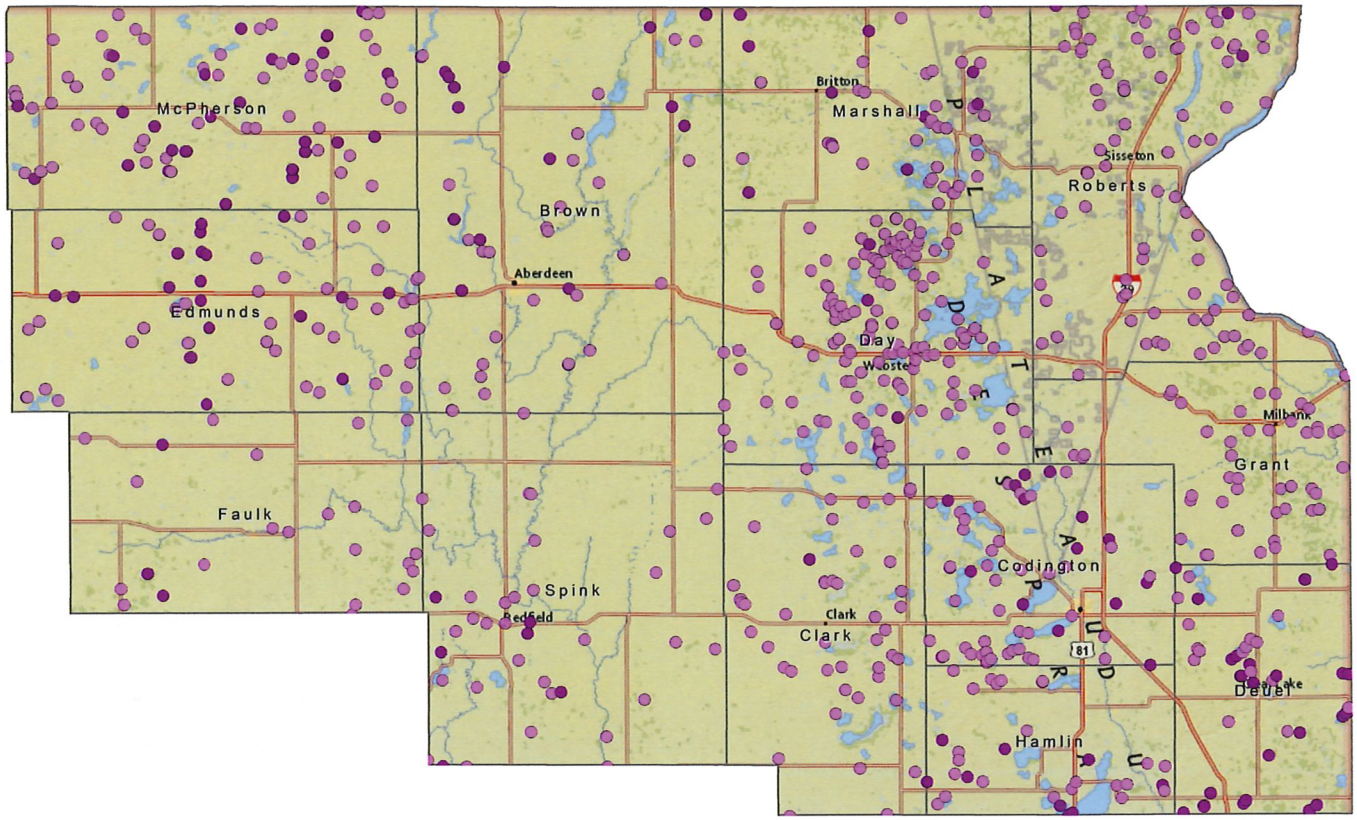
Overall, the game species (e.g. deer, Canada geese, and turkey) portion of the WDM program had a total expenditure of $658,903. GFP staff worked more than 9,500 hours to address these requests for assistance, which directly impacted 343 producers and landowners.

SUMMARY

GFP responded to a total of 855 requests for assistance within the entire WDM program which directly impacted 635 landowners and producers in Region 4. The total program expenditures including staff time, mileage, equipment and materials totaled $941,011.

REGION 4

WILDLIFE DAMAGE MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES
FY2019



Complaints Responded to in FY19

Multiple Complaints in Same Area

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