



State and Private Forestry Fact Sheet South Dakota 2025



Investment in State's Cooperative Programs

Program	FY 2024 Final
Community Forests and Open Space	\$0
Cooperative Lands - Forest Health Management	\$161,000
Forest Legacy	\$30,000
Forest Stewardship	\$119,046
Landscape Scale Restoration	\$0
State Fire Assistance	\$2,171,749
Urban and Community Forestry	\$378,785
Volunteer Fire Assistance	\$377,710
Total	\$3,238,290

NOTE: This funding is for all entities within the state, not just the State Forester's office.

The South Dakota Department of Agriculture Division of Resource Conservation and Forestry (RCF) uses State and Private Forestry funding to help South Dakotans manage and protect their forests and trees and conserve our natural resources. We work with farmers, ranchers, rural homeowners, urban dwellers, communities, conservation districts, and federal, state, and local agencies. These programs support our mission to conserve, protect, improve, and develop the natural resources of South Dakota for its citizens. These cooperative programs are key components of the State Forest Action Plan.

Program Goals

- Lead a safe, efficient, and effective fire management program.
- Recruit, develop, and retain a diverse, highly effective, and motivated workforce.
- Reduce wildland fire threats to communities' infrastructure.
- Initiate and maintain strong partnerships with other federal, state, and private organizations.
- Coordinate with federal and local land management partners in landscape scale fuels and forest management.
- Conserve and sustainably manage forest ecosystems and landscapes.
- Protect forests from wildfire, insects, and diseases.
- Protect and enhance the economic and environmental benefits of trees and forests.
- Connect people to trees and forests.

Key Issues

- Rapid urbanization and subdivision development.
- Age and drought have caused decline in windbreak health throughout the Great Plains.
- Insufficient funding for fire training for the hand crews, whose regular duties are to perform hazardous fuels reduction projects.
- Insufficient funding to establish a Fire Prevention Program.
- Underutilization of small diameter wood from forests and trees outside of forests.

Forest Facts and Accomplishments

Selected Facts	Value	FY 2024 Accomplishments	Value
Population	886,667	Landowners Receiving Educational or Technical Assistance	996
Acres of Forest Land	1,908,467	Acres Covered by New or Revised Forest Stewardship Plans	4,860
Acres of Nonindustrial Private Forest Land	730,938	Acres in Important Forest Resource Areas Covered by New or Revised Stewardship Plans	3,865
Number of NIPF Landowners	6,255	Volunteer Fire Departments Assisted	50
Acres of Federal Land Under State Fire Protection	314,000	State Fire Communities Assisted	13
Acres of Private Land Under State Fire Protection	48,611,840	Coop Forest Health Acres Protected	200
Number of Rural Fire Departments	365	Forest Legacy Project Acquisitions	0
Cities and Towns	311	Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	74
Forest Based Employment	10,193	Population Living in Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	559,651
Economic Impact of Forestry (by rank)	4	Urban Forestry Volunteer Assistance	14,763
State Forestry Budget (All Sources)	6,600,000		

Program Highlights

Community Forests and Open Space

There were no active projects in 2024.

Conservation Education

RCF conducted 84 presentations about Arbor Day, Tree City USA, Smokey Bear, and fire prevention, Project Learning Tree, and other community forestry subjects that were attended by schools and civic groups.

Cooperative Fire Protection

South Dakota Wildland Fire (SDWF) is committed to providing direct wildland fire protection services on forested and private lands within the state and all private lands within the Black Hills Forest Fire Protection District. SDWF cooperates with local, state, and federal agencies to support wildland fire management activities statewide, regional, and national. The Single Engine Air Tanker (SEAT) was fully functional this past summer and fall with South Dakota using the National Call When Needed Aviation resources on fires threatening state, private, and federal lands. A total of 202 sorties were flown by airtankers staged in South Dakota, resulting in 122,549 gallons of retardant and 7,975 gallons of water being dropped across 54 incidents. South Dakota National Guard Helicopters flew on seven different fires, for a total of 79 separate drops and a total of 29,309 gallons of water.

SDWF supported numerous fire training academies and training sessions statewide. Total sessions were 41 with 540 students attending.

SDWF issued 2,846 burning permits in 2024 to residents within the Black Hills Forest Fire Protection District for slash pile burning.

SDWF worked with fire departments statewide to ensure they have current Cooperative Fire Suppression Agreements for in and out-of-state mobilization purposes. SDWF also continues to support three Rocky Mountain Regional Incident Management Teams whose mission is to assist with regional and national incidents.

SDWF has 138 pieces of FEPP equipment in service which has a value of \$7,860,179.88. We currently have 77 contracts with South Dakota Fire Departments for FEPP equipment. In 2024 we assisted 3 fire departments to acquire trucks with a value of \$456,635.

Economic Action

RCF maintains a Log Finder website and is continuing to assist networking between people that have trees they want to sell or have removed, and people looking for trees to make value added wood products. RCF participates in the Council of Western State Foresters, Forest Products Committee. The Forest Products Committee is looking for opportunities to promote and expand wood utilization throughout the western United States and Pacific Islands. Service foresters continue to promote utilization of all wood products with their assistance to landowners.

Forest Health Protection

Forest Health management encompasses a wide array of growing conditions, management practices, and host species. Strategies used to address identified threats include educational materials and presentations, pest surveys and trapping, and preventative pest management. The results of diagnoses on current pest problems were communicated to a national audience associated with federal, state, and local governments, and the citizens of South Dakota through the weekly Pest Update located on the division's website and the division's emerald ash borer (EAB) website. The eight Forest Health Workshop meetings and nine EAB presentations were attended by over 1,100 people. The recorded Forest Health Workshops have been posted to the DANR YouTube channel and the DANR website. Four billboards to promote the national Don't Move Firewood campaign were displayed along main travel corridors across the state to inform the public about the potential threat of insects from firewood transported into the state, estimated impressions for the four-month billboard space topped 4 million. Efforts to mitigate mountain pine beetle and pine engraver beetle activity in the Black Hills included the use of an anti-aggregation pheromone to protect the relic stand of limber pine and suppression and monitoring trapping at two sawmills and Custer State Park. Between the Annual Forest Health Invasive Plant Program and the Invasive Plant Program, three counties' weed & pest boards were able to treat 1,548 acres of potentially damaging weeds on land adjacent to national grasslands or national forest lands. Invasive Plant funds were used to defray the costs of printing educational newsletters for more than 1,000 landowners in Custer County. The division completed 1,983 technical assists regarding insect and disease diagnoses on trees and woody plants.

Forest Legacy

The Big Sioux Forest Legacy project was approved for FY2023. This project is a fee acquisition of 221 acres of oak dominated upland forest in Lincoln County. The land was a former Boy Scout camp and connected two adjacent state-managed lands, forming a 1,970 acre continuous block of conserved land. The Property is part of the green ribbon of biologically rich, scenic and climate resilient forest hugging the meandering river. At the crossroads of three states, two major interstate highways, and within 30 miles of the fastest growing and largest metropolitan area in South Dakota the project will connect Newton Hills State Park (Park) to Johnson and McKee Game Production Areas (GPA) forming a 1,970-acre continuous block of conserved lands. A Forest Stewardship Plan has been completed for the property to date.

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks closed on this property September 9, 2024 for \$2,065,962.21.

Forest Stewardship

The Forest Stewardship Program provides landowners with technical assistance with the development and implementation of comprehensive resource management plans. RCF prepared and approved 25 new or updated forest stewardship plans covering 6,605 acres that were located in the high-priority area also identified as the federal investment area. During 2024, RCF conducted 15 virtual or in-person forest stewardship workshops which had attendance from private landowners, professionals, and the general public totaling 702 individuals. Prescriptions for non-commercial timber stand improvement projects on 692 acres where completed which are participating in the Coordinated Natural Resources Conservation Commission Thinning Grants or the United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). A total of 20 acres were marked as complete and improved forest systems.

Hazardous Fuels - Competitive Projects

Fuels reduction treatments on private lands in the Black Hills to reduce hazardous fuel loading and to create or enhance defensible space have resulted in 328.46 acres being thinned, 112.5 acres of hand piles being burned, and 112 acres chipped or masticated. These projects are funded through the Community Assistance Funds Adjacent to the National Forests and Grasslands Program and the Western

State Fire Manager Wildland Urban Interface Grants. These projects reduce fuel loading, reduce ladder fuels, and create a resilient landscape to minimize the negative impacts of wildfire on homes and critical infrastructure. Through this program, four community workshops were hosted to educate landowners about living in a wildfire environment and how to increase the survivability of their homes through fuel management and home hardening techniques.

Landowner Assistance

RCF provided 2,289 forest health, 62 forest management, and 61 prairie forestry technical assistance to private landowners, conservation districts, state parks, and cooperative extension personnel. These technical assists are targeted at threats identified in the South Dakota Forest Action Plan.

Landscape Scale Restoration

No Landscape Scale Restoration funding for 2024.

Urban and Community Forestry

RCF's community forestry program offers technical assistance for the establishment of tree boards, development of tree ordinances, organization of community tree inventories, identification and control of insect and disease problems, and assistance with grant preparation and administration. Educational programs on tree selection, planting, health, and maintenance are available for communities, schools, and

other organizations. The division provided 114 technical assists to community governments, volunteer/service groups and organizations, and private citizens in 118 communities. Communities and non-profit organizations were awarded grant funds totaling \$629,678.00.

Volunteer Fire Assistance

In 2024, \$504,639.65 in VFA grants were awarded to 84 Fire departments for a total project cost of \$1,012,534.35. Through these grants, departments were able to increase their capabilities and interoperability

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