

A wide-angle photograph of a native grassland landscape. The foreground is filled with tall, golden-brown grasses interspersed with vibrant purple and yellow wildflowers. In the middle ground, rolling green hills stretch across the horizon under a clear, bright blue sky. The overall scene is bright and open, representing a natural prairie environment.

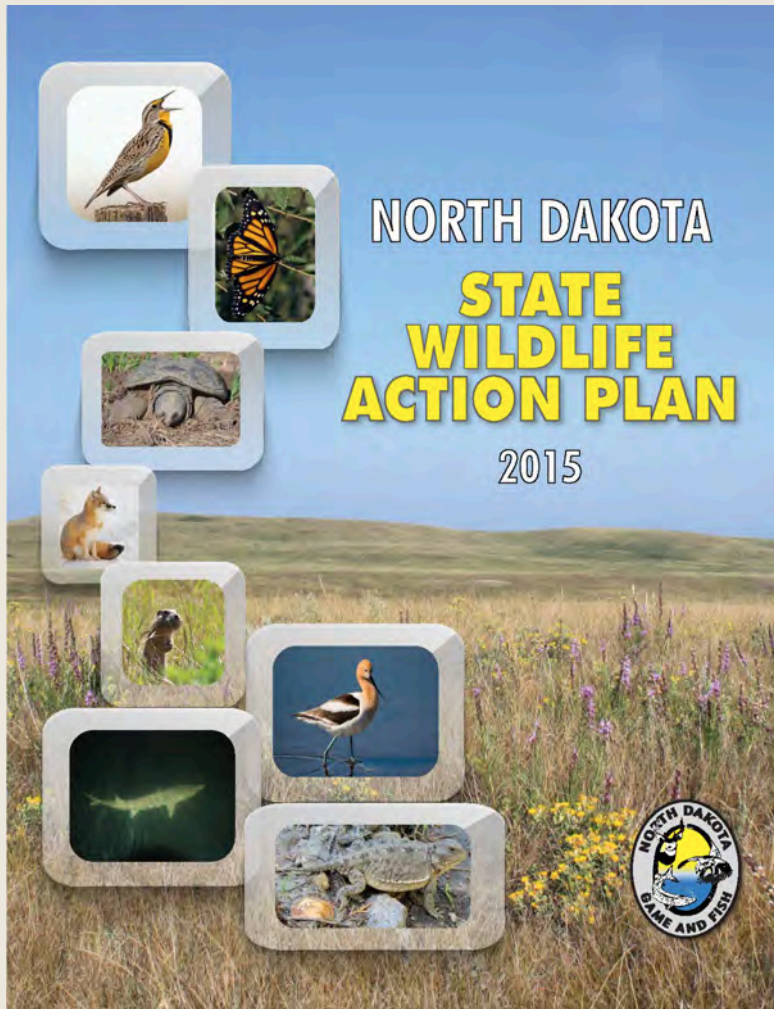
# NATIVE GRASSLANDS

## A Problem, A Vision, An Opportunity

USDA State Technical Committee Mtg.

March 4, 2020

# North Dakota State Wildlife Action Plan



- Serve as a blueprint for conserving our state's fish and wildlife and preventing endangered species.
- Three key goals:
  - *Keep common species common*
  - *Prevent further listings under the Endangered Species Act*
  - *Preserve the state's fish and wildlife resources for the foreseeable future*



# Species of Conservation Priority

- Rare, declining, or at-risk species
- 115 species
  - 47 *birds*
  - 2 *amphibians*
  - 9 *reptiles*
  - 21 *mammals*
  - 22 *fish*
  - 10 *mussels*
  - 4 *insects*
    - Monarch, Regal Fritillary, Dakota Skipper, Poweshiek Skipperling

# Endangered Species

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal federal entity for administering the Endangered Species Act (ESA)
- 12 species currently listed as threatened or endangered in North Dakota
- 11 petitions/species that include ND are under review
- Anticipate more petitions and listings

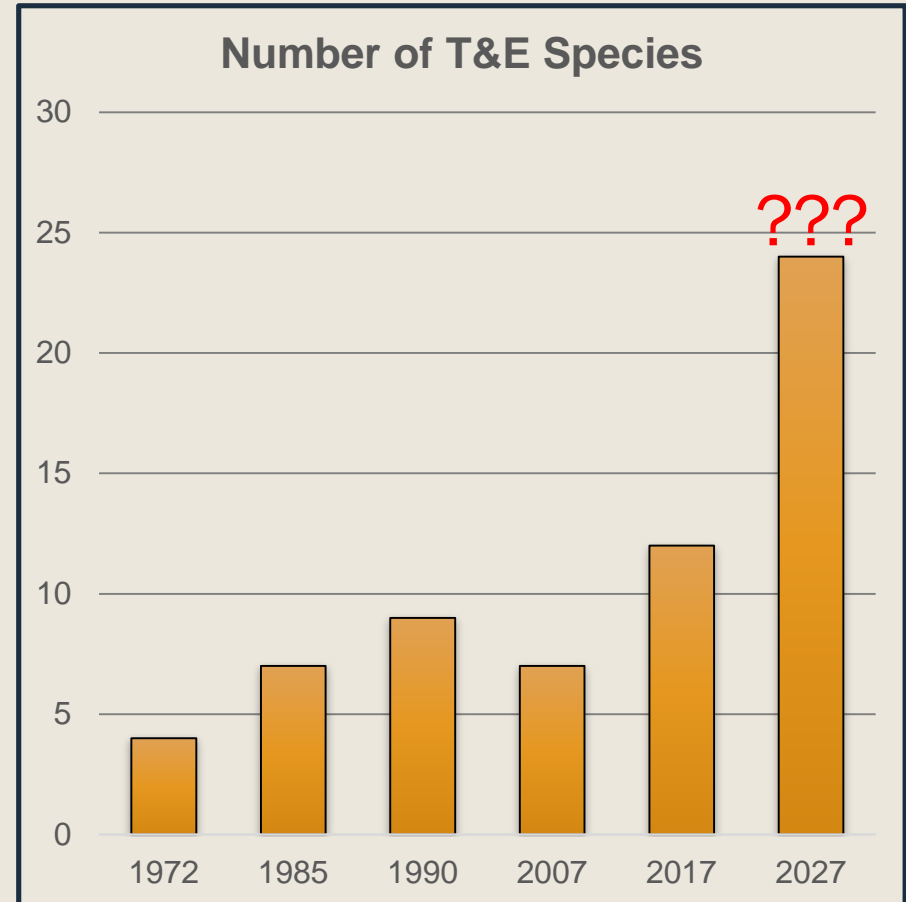


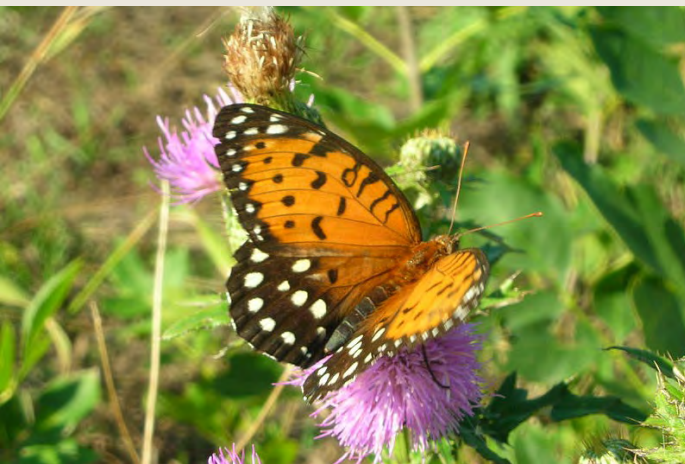


Photo Credit: Adrienne Antonsen



# ESA Listed Species

- North Dakota currently has 12 species listed as endangered or threatened.
  - *Black-Footed Ferret (E)*
  - *Dakota Skipper (T)*
  - *Gray Wolf (E)*
  - *Least Tern (E)*
  - *Northern Long-Eared Bat (T)*
  - *Pallid Sturgeon (E)*
  - *Piping Plover (T)*
  - *Poweshiek Skipperling (E)*
  - *Red Knot (T)*
  - *Rusty Patched Bumble Bee (E)*
  - *Western Prairie Fringed Orchid (T)*
  - *Whooping Crane (E)*



# ESA Petitioned Species & Species Under Review

- Sturgeon Chub
- Sicklefin Chub
- Moose
- **Western Bumble Bee**
- **Monarch Butterfly**
- **Regal Fritillary**
- Eastern Spotted Skunk?
- Prairie Gray Fox?
- Little Brown Bat
- Golden-winged Warbler?
- **Suckley's Bumble Bee**

# Grassland Birds

- Western Meadowlark
  - 1966-2015 trend: **-1.25**
  - *The State Bird is now rare in eastern 1/3 of the state.*

- Baird's Sparrow

- 1966-2015 trend: -3.59

- Chestnut-collared Longspur

- 1966-2015 trend: -4.24

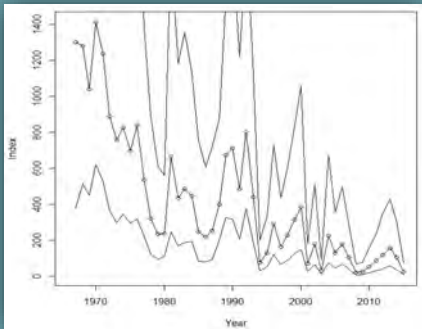
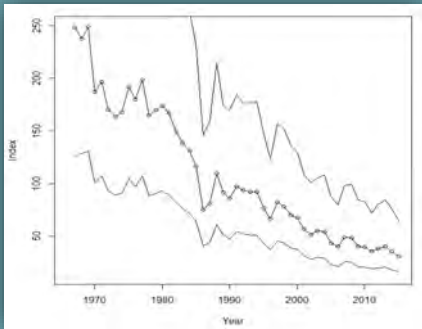
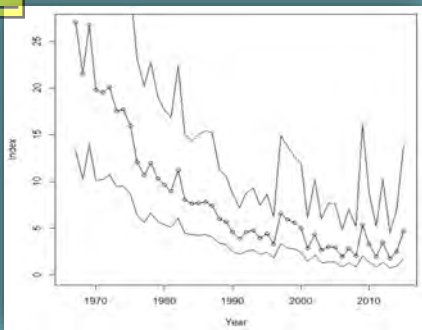
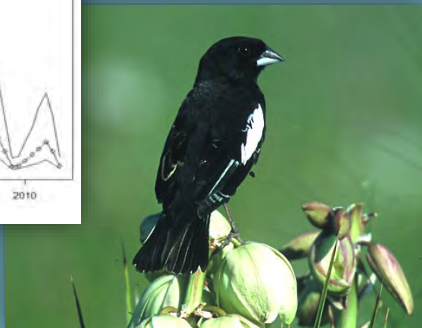
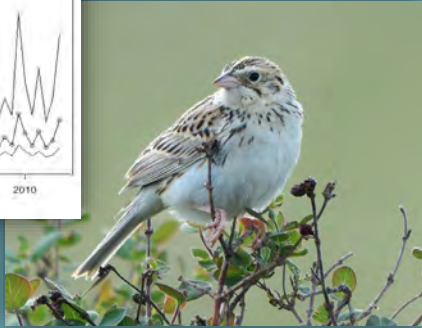
- Lark Bunting

- 1966-2015 trend: -8.03



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# UNBROKEN GRASSLANDS: NATIVE PRAIRIE

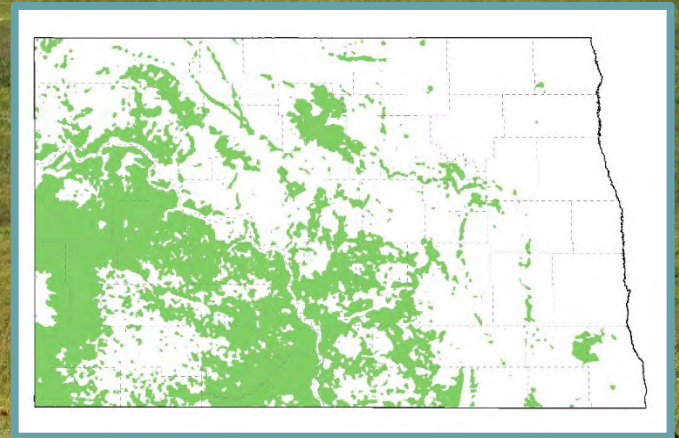
## GRASSLAND (48)

American Kestrel  
Baird's Sparrow  
Bobolink  
Brewer's Sparrow  
Burrowing Owl  
Chestnut-collared Longspur  
Dickcissel  
Ferruginous Hawk  
Golden Eagle  
Grasshopper Sparrow  
Greater Prairie Chicken  
Greater Sage-grouse  
Lark Bunting  
Le Conte's Sparrow  
Loggerhead Shrike  
Long-billed Curlew  
Marbled Godwit  
McCown's Longspur  
Nelson's Sparrow  
Northern Harrier  
Peregrine Falcon  
Prairie Falcon  
Sharp-tailed Grouse  
Short-eared Owl  
Sprague's Pipit  
Swainson's Hawk  
Upland Sandpiper  
Western Meadowlark  
Willet  
Wilson's Phalarope

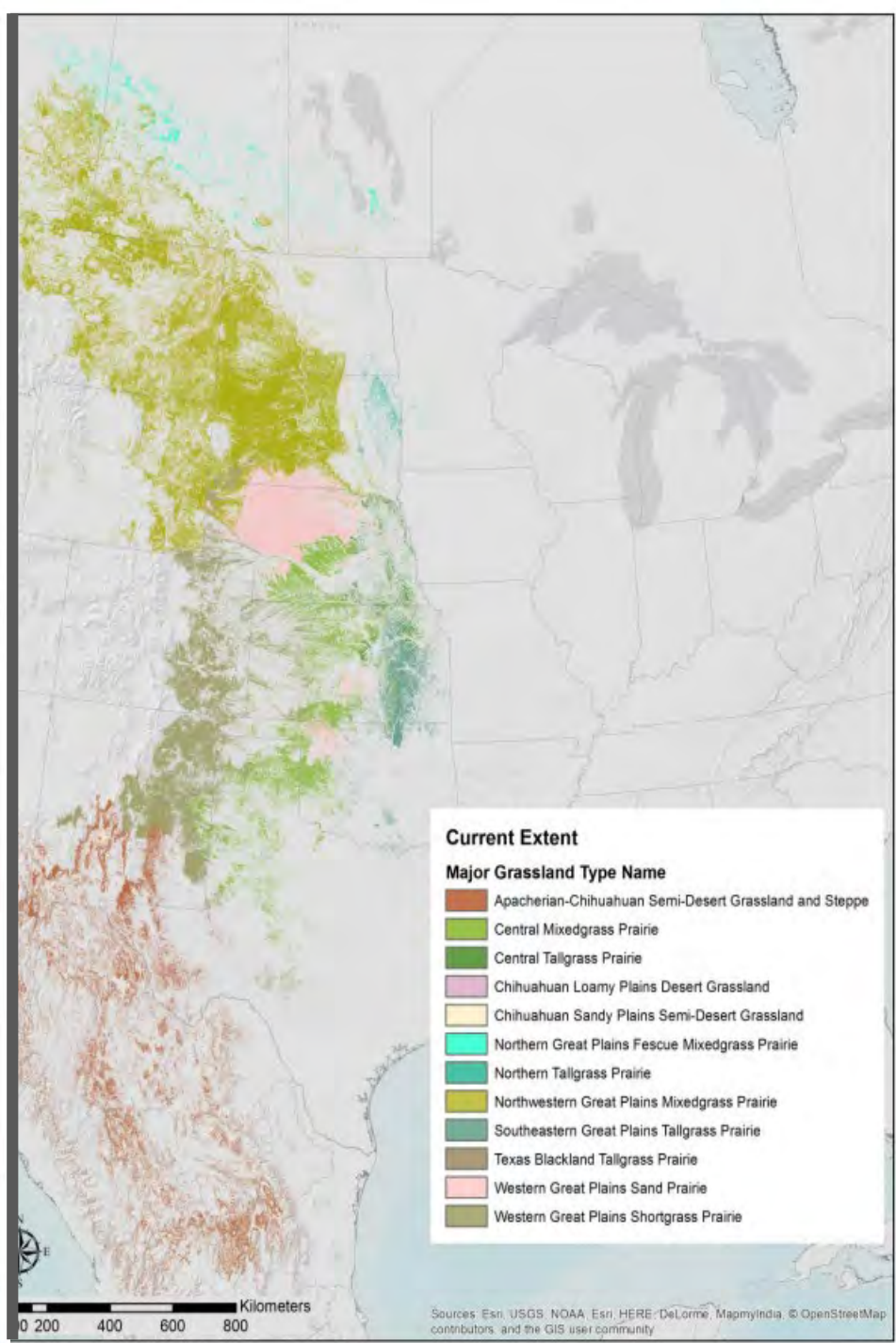
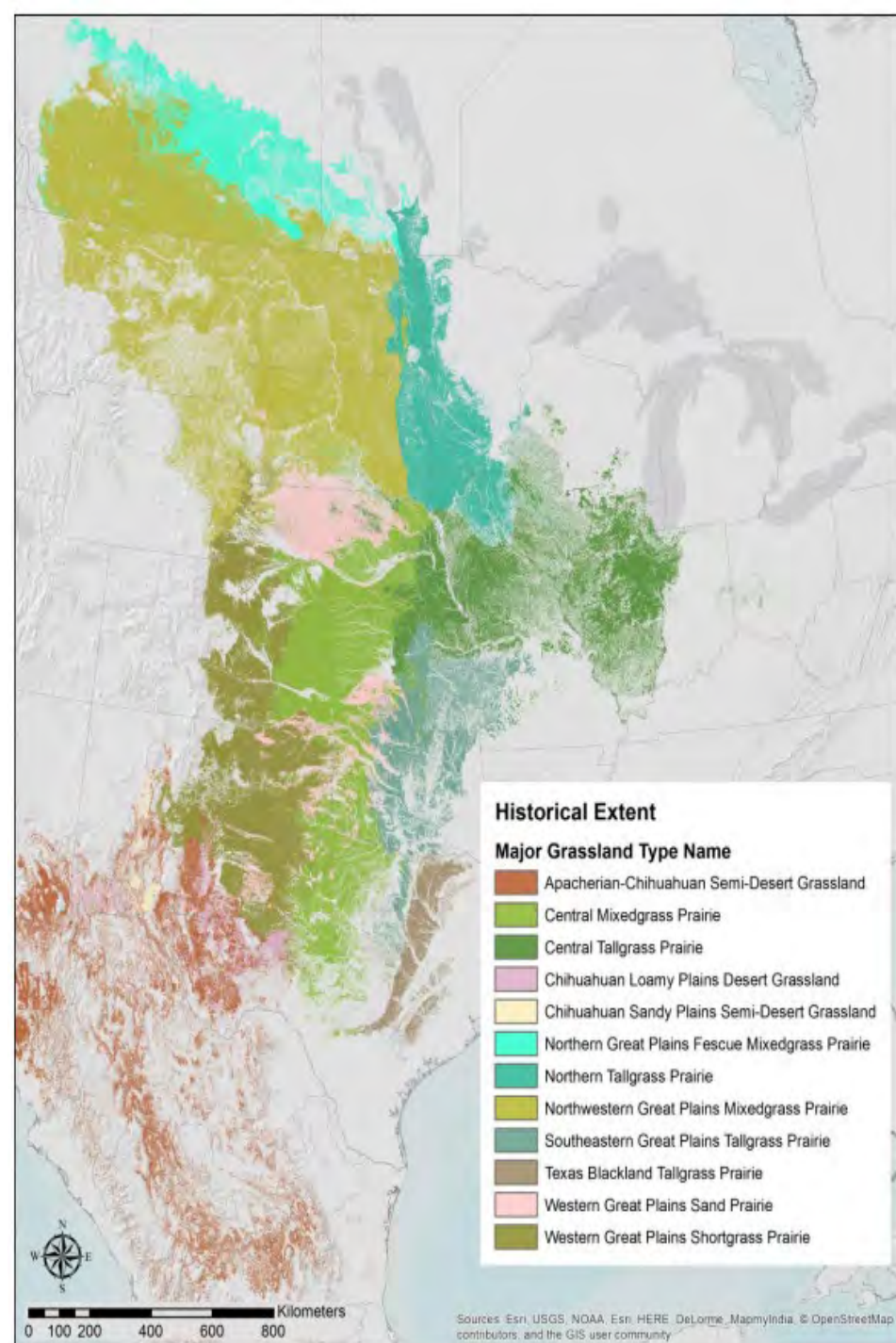
Northern Prairie Skink  
Plains Hog-nosed Snake  
Sagebrush Lizard  
Short-horned Lizard  
Smooth Green Snake

Black-footed Ferret  
Black-tailed Prairie Dog  
Hispid Pocket Mouse  
Merriam's Shrew  
Plains Pocket Mouse  
Pygmy Shrew  
Richardson's Ground Squirrel  
Sagebrush Vole  
Swift Fox

Dakota Skipper  
Poweshiek Skipperling  
Monarch Butterfly  
Regal Fritillary

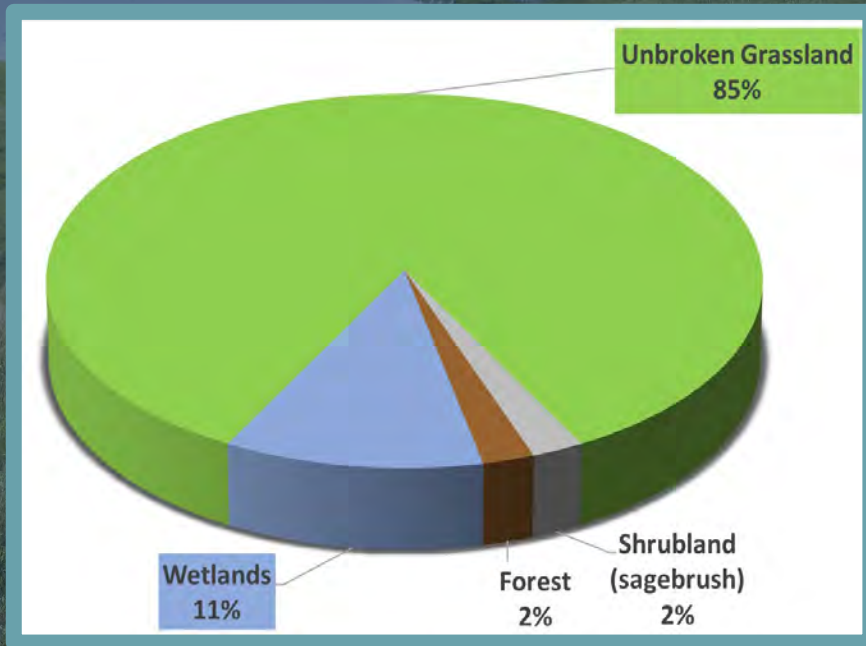


Support 48 Species of Conservation Priority

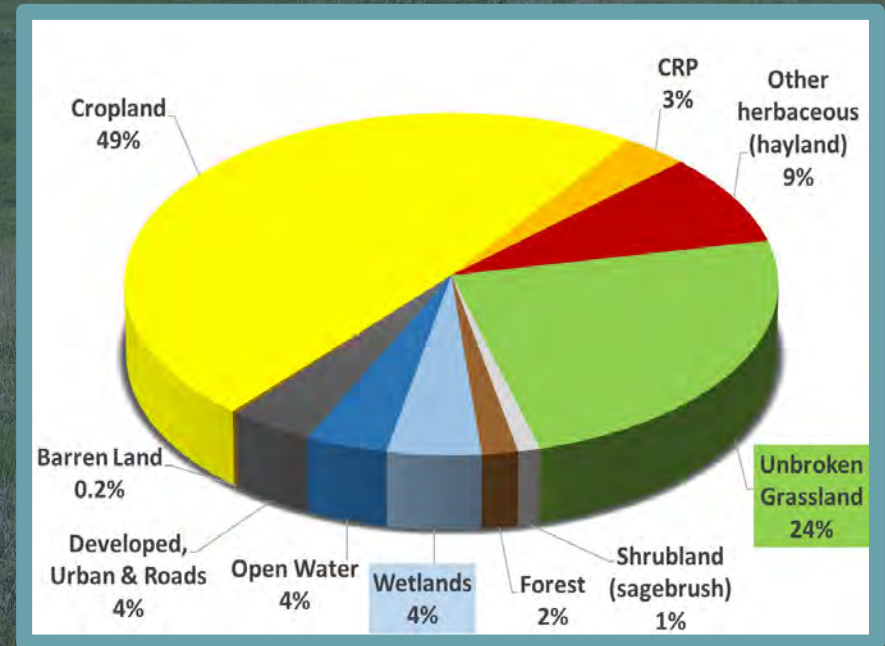


# State of the State

200 years ago



Today



**Wetlands: Loss of approx. 60%**  
**Native Prairie: Loss of approx. 72%**  
**Woodlands/Shrubs: Loss of approx. 25%**

# Many Factors Contribute to Grassland Loss

Idle Grassland and  
Invasive Species



# Cost of Endangered Species



- Dakota Skipper Recovery Plan
  - *Total Estimated Cost of the Recovery Actions = \$32,930,000*
  
- **TOTAL expenditures for domestic and foreign species in FY2016 were nearly \$1.5 billion.**
  - *\$1.4 billion by Federal agencies*
  - *\$100 million by States*
  
  - *FY2016 expenditures for Whooping Crane*
    - \$870,000 by Federal agencies
    - \$11,500 by States
  
  - *FY2016 expenditures for Piping Plover (NGP)*
    - \$10.8 million by Federal agencies
    - \$440,000 by States
  
- What is the real cost to the state of North Dakota, citizens, landowners, commerce, industry, etc. for doing business as society progresses?



Reactive



Proactive

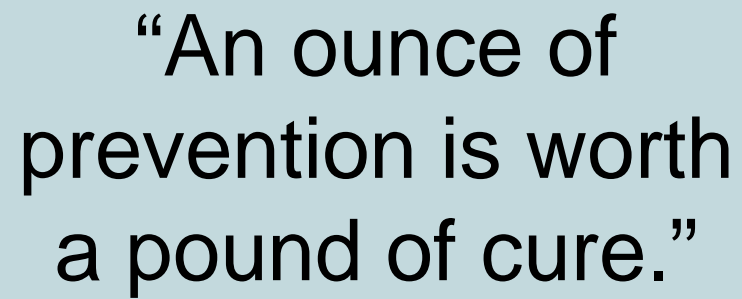


“Our analysis indicates that **84%** of the species listed under the (Endangered Species) Act are conservation reliant. **These species will require continuing, long-term management investments.**”

Scott et al., 2010

A photograph of a yellow-billed cuckoo perched on a snow-covered branch. The bird has a bright yellow breast and belly, a black collar around its neck, and brown and white speckled wings and back. Its bill is long and pointed. The background is a soft, out-of-focus white, suggesting a snowy or winter environment. The title 'THE VISION' is overlaid in large, dark blue, sans-serif capital letters at the top of the image.

# THE VISION

A light blue speech bubble with a white border and a tail pointing towards the bird. It contains a quote in black, sans-serif font.

“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”



# **THE MEADOWLARK INITIATIVE**

## **RECOVERING GRASSLANDS IN NORTH DAKOTA**

### **Element 1.**

Revitalize, reconnect, and sustain existing working grasslands & ranches.







# **THE MEADOWLARK INITIATIVE**

## **RECOVERING GRASSLANDS IN NORTH DAKOTA**

### **Element 2.**

Reinvent a statewide grassland reconstruction program.





# THE MEADOWLARK INITIATIVE

## RECOVERING GRASSLANDS IN NORTH DAKOTA

### Element 3.

Offset impacts to grassland habitat function and value as development advances.





# THE MEADOWLARK INITIATIVE

## RECOVERING GRASSLANDS IN NORTH DAKOTA

### Element 4.

Meadowlarks for human well-being.





# THE MEADOWLARK INITIATIVE

## RECOVERING GRASSLANDS IN NORTH DAKOTA

### Element 5.

Advance grassland ecosystem recovery by learning.



# USDA RCPP – An Opportunity

- Promotes coordination of conservation activities with partners, producers, and landowners
- Pools partner resources
- Offers value-added contributions to expand capabilities
- Addresses regional natural resource concerns
- Provides measurable improvements and outcomes



**USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service offers voluntary Farm Bill programs that benefit both agricultural producers and the environment.**

**Overview**

The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) promotes coordination of NRCS conservation activities with partners that offer value-added contributions to expand our collective ability to address on-farm, watershed, and regional natural resource concerns. Through RCPP, NRCS seeks to co-invest with partners to implement projects that demonstrate innovative solutions to conservation challenges and provide measurable improvements and outcomes tied to the resource concerns they seek to address.

**Benefits**

RCPP makes available a variety of NRCS conservation activities to help partners, ag producers, and private landowners address local and regional natural resource challenges.

**How It Works**

Partners apply to NRCS for RCPP project awards. Once projects are selected, NRCS works with partners to set aside a certain pool of funding for an awarded project. Producers, landowners, and partners then enter into producer contracts and supplemental agreements with NRCS to carry out agreed-to conservation activities.

**Who is Eligible?**

Only eligible organizations interested in partnering with NRCS on conservation projects can develop applications for the RCPP competition. The lead partner for an RCPP project is the entity that submits an application, and if selected for an award is ultimately responsible for collaborating with NRCS to successfully complete an RCPP project.

See the RCPP funding announcement for details about what types of organizations are eligible to apply.

RCPP projects must be carried out on agricultural or nonindustrial private forest land or associated land on which NRCS determines an eligible activity would help achieve conservation benefits.

**Conservation Activities**

RCPP projects may include any combination of authorized, on-the-ground conservation activities implemented by farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners. These activities include:

- Land management/land improvement/restoration practices
- Land rentals
- Entity-held easements
- United States-held easements
- Public works/watersheds.

**How to Apply**

Interested partners must apply through the RCPP portal ([nrcs.my.salesforce.com](https://nrcs.my.salesforce.com)). Applications are being accepted through December 3, 2019.

Once RCPP projects are selected, producers and landowners can apply to participate in projects that cover their geographic area. Interested producers should visit their local USDA Service Center to see if their land is included in the scope of any existing RCPP projects.

**What's New in the 2018 Farm Bill**

RCPP is now a standalone program with its own funding—\$300 million annually.

NRCS may award up to 15 Alternative Funding Arrangement projects, which are more grant-like and rely more on partner capacity to implement conservation activities.

RCPP now has two funding pools—Critical Conservation Areas and a State/Multistate pool.

RCPP partners must develop and report on environmental outcomes.

**More Information**

For more information, visit [nrcs.usda.gov/farmbill](https://nrcs.usda.gov/farmbill) or farmers.gov.

Find your local USDA Service Center at [farmers.gov/service-locator](https://farmers.gov/service-locator).

**Natural Resources Conservation Service**

July 2019 [nrcs.usda.gov](https://nrcs.usda.gov)

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

# R CPP Partners Mtg.

- **WHAT:** Partner meeting to discuss potential collaboration on a 2020 USDA Regional Conservation Partnership Program (R CPP) proposal to protect, enhance, and reconstruct native grasslands in North Dakota.
- **WHY:** A growing conservation crisis is occurring in our state, as well as in our country. In North Dakota, a prairie state, less than a quarter of its original native grasslands still remain... and much of the remaining is fragmented, invaded, and degraded.
  - *North Dakota's state bird is declining at a rate of -1.3% annually*
  - *Forty-eight of ND's 115 rare and declining species of conservation priority depend on grasslands*
  - *Native pollinators, bees and butterflies, are experiencing concerning declines and uncertain future*
  - *The number of cattle operations in our country is declining at about 1 percent per year*
- **WHEN:** March 4, 2020 (1:00-4:00)
- **WHERE:** Ducks Unlimited Great Plains Regional Office, 2525 River Road, Bismarck, ND 58503 Bismarck, ND

# Discussion...

