



DEPARTMENT of AGRICULTURE and NATURAL RESOURCES

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To: Senator Jean Hunhoff, Lead Co-Chair
Representative Mike Derby, Co-Chair

CC: Russell Olson, Auditor General
Jim Terwilliger, Commissioner

From: Hunter Roberts, Secretary

Date: November 1, 2024

Subject: Progress Report on HB 1256 – An Act to make an appropriation for the cleanup of the Big Sioux Watershed and River and to declare an emergency

The Joint Committee on Appropriations' April 23, 2021, letter of intent directed the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (DANR) to develop a management plan for the Big Sioux Watershed and River and to submit a progress report to the Committee by November 1 each year until the funds have been expended. As you will see in this progress report, over the past year DANR has made significant progress in getting riparian buffers within the Big Sioux watershed. Below is DANR's 2024 progress report for HB 1256.

Item 1: Progress and Updates on the Management Plan:

Throughout 2024, DANR staff, Nonpoint Source Watershed Project Coordinators, South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks (GFP) Private Lands Biologists, Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologists, Conservation District staff, NRCS staff and the Ducks Unlimited Agronomist have been conducting outreach through direct personal contacts as well providing information at several different conservation venues such as the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Technical Committee meetings, Dakotafest 2024, National Pheasant Fest and Quail Classic 2024 and the annual convention for the South Dakota Association of Conservation Districts.

In January 2023, DANR staff met with the RBI Committee to propose a partnership opportunity with GFP to add RBI funds as an incentive to acres enrolled into the CREP or CRP programs, and to create a new incentive for animal waste management systems (AWMS) within one mile of qualifying waterbodies to prevent runoff from animal feeding operations. These proposals have been implemented.

On October 12, 2023, the RBI Committee met again to discuss expanding eligibility for AWMS because of feedback from the NRCS Agriculture Nutrient Management Team. The team suggested expanding eligibility to animal waste management systems outside of the one-mile limit if there was direct water quality benefit to the Big Sioux River or its tributaries. The committee concurred with NRCS' recommendation and DANR has updated its guidelines.

In addition, DANR staff modified the program to include eligibility of RBI, RBI/CRP and AWMS to waterbodies within the Big Sioux River Watershed not included on the ARSD 74:51:03 list. Waterbodies not listed in ARSD 74:51:03 may also be eligible for HB 1256 funds with the designation of the county commission.

DANR and our partners continue to review and revise the program to maximize its impact and, as a result, there are several potential projects being discussed or are in negotiations for RBI, CRP/CREP, SRAM, and AWMS practices. DANR anticipates spending all the HB 1256 funds before the funding authorization ends in 2025.

In October 2023, direct mailings were sent to 1,293 landowners in the Big Sioux watershed. Following the direct mailings and adjustments to eligibility requirements in 2023, interest in the program rapidly increased. Another direct mailing to landowner is planned for later November 2024.

Item 2: Enumeration of approved projects and respective amount of funding each project received from this legislation as well as other fund sources:

As of October 22, 2024, 35 projects have enrolled a total of 218,556 linear feet of riparian buffers in the Big Sioux River watershed. This equates to 608.03 acres of protected buffers. These 35 projects have spent a total of \$1,166,184.55 of HB 1256 dollars.

There are 26 additional buffer projects involving 142,652 linear feet in the later stages of negotiations. This equates to 382.38 acres at a cost of \$798,537.23.

Item 3: The impact each project had on reducing pollution:

Pollution reductions from the 35 buffers under contract are as follows:

Nitrogen 1593.42 lbs./year

Phosphorus 331.83 lbs./year

Sediment 205.87 tons/year

Item 4: Documentation of the sampling and metrics used in the pollution assessment:

Pollution reductions are calculated using EPA's Pollution Load Estimation Tool (PLET) model. This is the standard model used to report nonpoint source pollution for all the watershed projects in the State. In addition, DANR continues to collect water quality samples throughout the Big Sioux River Watershed to document water quality conditions.