

Regional Conservation Partnership Program

North Dakota Meadowlark Initiative

What is the Meadowlark Initiative?

The Meadowlark Initiative is a strategy initiated by the North Dakota Game and Fish Department, tapping into the collective insights, resources, and efforts of conservation, agriculture, and industry partners to enhance, restore, and sustain native grasslands in North Dakota. Healthy, diverse native grasslands make up vital habitat for North Dakota's state bird, the Western Meadowlark, the ambassador for this proactive, comprehensive effort to conserve grasslands in the state. The vision of the Meadowlark Initiative is to promote and create healthy, thriving grasslands that provide biodiversity and prosperity for wildlife, pollinators, ranching operations and communities.

Why the Meadowlark Initiative?

- The Western Meadowlark is declining 1.3% per year in North Dakota.
- 72% of the native prairie has been converted to other uses; currently only one-quarter of North Dakota's land mass is grassland.
- The number of U.S. cattle ranches is declining 1% per year.
- 2 out of every 5 farms (39%) produced cattle in 2002 in North Dakota; in 2017, just 1 out of every 3 farms (34%) produced cattle.
- 1 out of 4 bumble bees are at risk of extinction within 50 years.

- Four grassland dependent insects have been added to the threatened and endangered species list in North Dakota since 2014.
- -53% population loss in grassland birds since 1970 (about 720 million birds).
- Of the nearly 5 million natural wetland acres in North Dakota, 60% have been converted or lost.

Meadowlark Initiative and RCPP

A main component of the Meadowlark Initiative is the USDA Regional Conservation Partnership Program. The North Dakota Game and Fish Department, along with 13 contributing partners leveraged their funds and resources to work collaboratively across the state on the Meadowlark Initiative.

Where is the Meadowlark Initiative?

RCPP is available statewide. The primary focus of RCPP is planting marginal cropland to diverse native perennial grasses and enhancing grasslands through grazing.



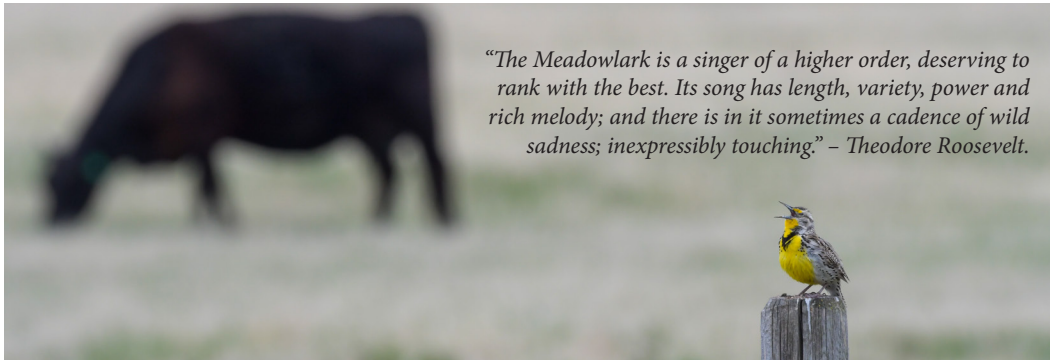
**MEADOWLARK
INITIATIVE**

The overarching goal of the Meadowlark Initiative is to revitalize, reconnect, and sustain existing working grasslands and ranches for the recovery of rare and declining grassland species.



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“The Meadowlark is a singer of a higher order, deserving to rank with the best. Its song has length, variety, power and rich melody; and there is in it sometimes a cadence of wild sadness; inexpressibly touching.” – Theodore Roosevelt.

What Practices Are Available Through the Meadowlark Initiative?

Producers have the opportunity to plant marginal cropland to diverse native perennial grasses for grazing. Cost share to establish grass, install grazing infrastructure, and grassland enhancements is also available.

During the first three years of grass establishment, producers are eligible to receive a rental payment as the land transitions from cropland to grazing land.

Additionally, many of the contributing partners have programs and services available to private landowners as part of the Meadowlark Initiative as well.

How to Apply

Applications for RCPP may be obtained and filed with NRCS at any USDA Service Center.

Additionally, many of the conservation partners have programs and services available to private landowners as part of the Meadowlark Initiative as well.

Please visit your local USDA Service Center or one of the conservation partners listed at <https://gf.nd.gov/meadowlark-initiative> to learn more about additional conservation opportunities.



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North Dakota Game and Fish Department
US Fish and Wildlife Service
Audubon Dakota
North Dakota Natural Resource Trust
Delta Waterfowl
Ducks Unlimited
Pheasants Forever
The Nature Conservancy
Mule Deer Foundation
World Wildlife Fund
Northern Great Plains Joint Venture
Ecological Insights
Millborn Seeds
North Dakota Grazing Lands Coalition

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