



Forest Stewardship...

The term evokes a process of caring for the forest environment: Trees, water, wildlife, soils, and people.

Trees are the defining vegetation of the forest. Without them, there is no forest. They create the cool environment that allows the shrubs, forbs, and other herbaceous vegetation to thrive under their shading canopy. The amount and kinds of vegetation change depending on how much sunlight reaches the forest floor.

The forest creates a home for many species of wildlife. Deer, song birds, ruffed grouse, turkeys, woodpeckers, raptors, squirrels, and many other species inhabit forested areas. The type of wildlife changes depending on the species of trees and other vegetation present. Many wildlife species help the forest perpetuate itself by dispersing tree seeds.



All of life depends on water to survive. In the semi-arid State of South Dakota, forests thrive in the wetter parts of the State. The Black Hills, where higher elevation forces rain and snowfall from the clouds, contain the largest expanse of forest in the State. Draws, streams, and rivers provide suitable water for hardwood trees to survive across the prairie to the east. The trees reciprocate by filtering pollutants from the soil - nitrogen and other nutrients from fertilizers and manure that can reach toxic levels in ground and surface waters are filtered by the roots of trees and other woody and herbaceous vegetation. Trees and shrubs also slow the movement of water during floods which reduces scouring. Extensive roots hold the soil in place.



Soils form a foundation for vegetation. They hold the nutrients and water that forest plants need to thrive and grow. Exposed soils are subject to erosion from wind and water. Trees and other plants protect the soil by extending their root systems down through the soil profile, holding the soil in place. Their canopies intercept the rain slowing its impact on the forest floor, and slow the wind speed close to the ground preventing wind erosion.

Many forest inhabitants survive in the environment that the forest creates, and return something to the forest that helps keep it intact.

People also inhabit the forest.

Some people are temporary inhabitants, visiting the forest for occasional recreational pursuits. Others set up residence, building homes and/or utilizing the natural resources for wood production, cattle grazing, hunting, boating, or commercial recreation. But what can people give back to the forest to keep it intact?

Forest Stewardship, a US Department of Agriculture Forest Service program that is administered by your State Forester, encourages people to give something back to the forest through active management.



People who purchase forest land want something from it when they buy it. Some people want to harvest the wood. Others want to graze the forage for cattle production. Many people want the solitude that the forest can provide, while enjoying frequent visits from wildlife. Others who have lived on the prairie all their lives just want to live in an area where they are surrounded by trees. They like it just the way it is when they buy it.

But the forest is constantly changing. Some changes are very slow — it takes a pine tree about 100 years to grow from a seedling to a mature tree in the Black Hills. Other changes take place quickly —mountain pine beetle can kill hundreds of acres of trees in a few years; catastrophic fire can kill thousands of acres of trees in a few hours. Proper management can mitigate the effects of wildfire and mountain pine beetle, giving the trees - and the forest - a chance to survive.

The Forest Stewardship Program offers forest landowners the opportunity to work with a forester to identify what they want from their forest land, determine activities needed to achieve what they want, and pursue them in a manner that ensures that the forest remains intact for future generations. By matching human desires with forest resource capabilities, you can ensure that the forest will be here for you, your children, and your children's children.



Foresters can help forest landowners utilize Best Management Practices that minimize the effect of various activities on the soil, and protect water quality.

On the Great Plains



Agroforesters can design windbreaks to protect soils, keep blowing snow off of roads, protect cattle, conserve energy in homes, and provide wildlife habitat. They can also provide options for renovating existing windbreaks that are no longer functioning to their fullest potential.

South Dakotans work hard to establish trees on the Great Plains. They realize their value, and cherish the quality of life created by their presence. Properly designed and planted windbreaks offer years of service, value, and enjoyment to people who dedicate their time and land to trees.

Contact your State Forester to find out more about the Forest Stewardship Program in South Dakota.



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