

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Spring 2013
Newsletter



Update From Wildland Fire Division

Firefighters at the South Dakota Division of Wildland Fire are preparing for the 2013 fire season. Part of the preparation includes reviewing the lessons learned from previous fires and getting equipment ready to go. These preparations are used to protect the citizens of South Dakota, property, and the environment from the ravages of wildland fires.

Unusual winter fire activity and the conditions that created it have fire managers bracing for what could be yet another smoke-filled summer. The area is already in a moisture deficit and the severity of the upcoming season will depend on the accumulation of spring rainfall.

Due to the extremely dry conditions and the lack of snow cover throughout the colder season, firefighters have been kept busy suppressing small wildland fires in what would normally have been our winter months. Because of this lack of moisture, it has been essential for firefighters to maintain readiness.

The Division is hosting a Wildland Fire Academy to be held in Ft. Pierre in March where an estimated 266 students will gather from volunteer fire departments and state and federal agencies. Training opportunities like this are used to gain fire qualifications and reinforce safety practices.

Training Officer Rob Lehmann says, "We've spent the winter months planning and preparing for the summer. Now is a good time to provide training and to develop and improve interagency relationships."

There are many Wildland Urban Interface projects in progress and many in the planning stages. It is extremely important for housing developments and communities to be pro-active in their planning of property protection.

The Wildland Fire Division is confident in their level of preparedness and ready for whatever the upcoming fire season may bring. Firefighters are prepared to protect the properties of the citizens of South Dakota.



State Fair Park Events

May 3-4: Territorial
Professional Bull
Riding Finals

May 5: NBHA District 4
Jackpot Barrel
Racing

May 11: Men's Expo

May 18-19: Wrangler Team
Roping

May 24-26: NBHA Finals
Barrel Racing

May 31-June 1: The Original SD BBQ Championships

May 31-June 2: Wheel Jam

June 8-9: Outdoor Expo



SDDA Spring Happenings

March 21-24-Wildfire Academy, Ft. Pierre

March 23-Pavilion Ag Day, Washington Pavilion, Sioux Falls. SDDA staff will attend, so stop by our booth!

March 27-South Dakota Dairy Outlook, Central Plains Dairy Expo, 5-7 p.m.

April 5-12-Governor's China Trade Mission

April 20-Resource Conservation Speech Contest, State Capitol, Pierre

May 1-Conservation Leaders Group Meeting on Mountain Pine Beetle Efforts, Rapid City

June 1-Wildland Fire Lead Field Office Open House

June 8-"Today's Forest" Education Series

June 25-26-Governor's Ag Development Summit, Pierre



Financing Beginning Farmers

Resources are available at the South Dakota Department of Agriculture (SDDA) to help young and beginning farmers and ranchers get their start in agriculture. The Beginning Farmer Bond program through SDDA is available for eligible beginning farmers to purchase agricultural land at lower interest rates.

“The beginning farmer bond program has different eligibility criteria than other governmental programs, so I would encourage producers to contact us if they are purchasing agricultural real estate,” says Terri LaBrie, Finance Administrator for SDDA.



The program doesn't have an upper age limit, nor does it have a limit on off-farm income. To be eligible, an applicant must be at least 18 years old and a resident of South Dakota. They must have a net worth of under \$400,000, and cannot own, or previously have owned, more than 30 percent of the county median acres. The maximum amount of a beginning farmer bond is \$501,100 for calendar year 2013. This limit is set annually by the federal government.

SDDA does not finance operating expenses or re-finance prior debt. Other programs are available for the purchase of livestock, dairy financing, feedlot financing, grain storage and value-added businesses.

Program information can be found at www.sdda.sd.gov or call SDDA, Division of Agricultural Development at 605.773.5436.

2013 Legislative Update

SDDA enjoyed a successful 88th Legislative Session. The Department was active on a variety of bills including: funding for mountain pine beetle and fire suppression, the addition of oil and gas to our Ag Mediation Program, updates to our State Fair Park, and a renovation of our newly-acquired Rapid City campus which will house our Wildland Fire and Resource Conservation and Forestry teams late 2013-early 2014.

SDDA also introduced two bills as part of Governor Dugaard's Better Government Initiative aimed at cleaning up and streamlining statutes. This process ensures statutes are kept current and maximizes the effectiveness of our programs.

Governor's Drought Task Force Update

Next Meeting: 1:30-2:30 p.m. CT, March 25
Emergency Operations Center, Pierre

South Dakota Focus on PBS did a Drought Update segment on Feb. 28. Visit South Dakota Focus online to view!

February 4, 2013 Meeting:

- National Weather Service reported rivers running 10-30% lower than normal.
 - State Climatologist Dennis Today reported the state is in a holding pattern and therefore no change in the U.S. Drought Monitor.
 - Suggestions were discussed on adding to the agency's response actions to drought.
- Visit drought.sd.gov for more information.**

Arbor Day in South Dakota

By Tiffany Arp, Urban Forestry Specialist

It has been over 135 years since J. Sterling Morton founded Arbor Day in Nebraska. In 1947, the South Dakota State Legislature designated the last Friday in April as South Dakota's official Arbor Day. The law was repealed in 1995 as part of an omnibus elimination of laws that restrict or pertain to education, but was reestablished by the 1998 Legislature. This year, Arbor Day is Friday, April 26th.

Arbor Day is designed to specifically recognize trees for the many environmental functions and values they provide. On or around Arbor Day, citizens across South Dakota come together within their communities to plant and celebrate trees.

There are many ways to celebrate Arbor Day. Here are a few ideas to get you started: (1) celebrate in a personal way by planting a tree yourself. It is a boon to the environment and a commitment to stewardship. (2) Read a book about trees. Learn to identify trees in your yard and neighborhood. (3) Enjoy the outdoors. Visit a local park or take a nature hike. (4) Attend a class on tree and plant care. Or (5) volunteer with a local tree-planting organization. You'll meet new people and make a difference in your community.

Arbor Day celebrations are not restricted to South Dakota's official Arbor Day; many communities have tailored their Arbor Day celebration to optimal planting conditions throughout the spring, summer, and autumn. Whether you celebrate trees on Arbor Day or not, take some time to bring your family outdoors, grab your new tree and shovel, and play in the dirt!

For questions on forestry in South Dakota, contact the SDDA Resource Conservation and Forestry Division at 605.773.3623.