

Conservation Speech

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Monopoly is a game of economics, more so a game of money...which I happen to understand very well. By the third time I pass "Go," I've got half of the properties in the bag, along with the utilities. My fellow customers, I mean players, don't stand a chance against my mega monopoly. This game is a delicate balance of economics, in which every player contributes to the overall stability of the entire game. This example of friendly competition can be related to the economic impact of conservation in America. The South Dakota Department of Agriculture, the South Dakota Association of Conservation Districts and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service are just a few of the diverse divisions that contribute to the delicate balance of progression and preservation of conservation. To understand the economic impacts further we'll observe two main areas of current conservation. The fishing industry and pine beetle mitigation.

The Game Fish and Park reported that in 2008 South Dakota's fishing industry generated \$154 million and created 2,500 jobs, exemplifying how essential this industry is to our overall economy. What's ironic is how contingent this industry is on a balanced fish population within the rivers and lakes. In recent years, the invasive species of the Asian and silver carp have migrated up through the Mississippi river into South Dakota and pose a threat to the Great Lakes. These invasive species have overwhelmed native fish as competition for the same food source. In 2012 the Obama administration took a step in conservation by announcing that it would spend \$51.5 million to defend the Great Lakes from bighead and silver carp. Some tactics include increasing water sampling to measure migration patterns and testing new methods of controlling the carp. This act of conservation has a direct economic impact because not only is our

nation allotting money to this fight, but the goal is to preserve and protect the balance of America's waterways and the fishing industry that contributes immensely to the entire economy.

Just like my ability to sneak up and buy Monopoly property out from underneath my sister, pine beetles have become an ominous presence in the Black Hills' forests. An estimated 384,000 acres, one third, of the 1.2 million acres of National Forest System lands in the Black Hills has been destroyed by the epidemic since 1998 and the infestation is growing rapidly, doubling from 22,000 new acres affected in 2008 to 44,000 new acres affected in 2009, according to Sandy Geffre of the Black Hills Pioneer. The devastation can be seen when looking at the mountainous landscape, orange-brown dried up pine trees that were once a dark and luscious green. Fortunately, members of the Black Hills Regional Mountain Pine Beetle Working Group are pursuing assistance from Gov. Dennis Daugaard and the SD Legislature. A member of the working group, Bill Coburn, estimates \$1 million worth of work is needed soon to save valuable wood and slow the spread of the beetles. This cry for conservation has enacted a pine beetle mitigation effort that will be spending \$8 million by the end of 2014.

These examples are just a couple of the economic impacts of conservation. In a state that presents a beautiful landscape on either side of the river, it's important to realize that acts of conservation are a long-term investment. Often times, the short-term economic impacts of furthering conservation become a barrier in gaining support and instituting action. The end result of conservation cannot be seen right away because it is an ongoing investment in preserving the natural resources that we already have, and developing new technology and techniques to further the conservation crusade.

Investing has always been risky, but investing into the future of conservation is an economic impact we can be proud of. It's a proactive act in supporting the industries that rely on the living land for its earnings. Kinda like the game of Monopoly, investing for the future of the players' personal success, the only difference, conservation isn't just a game; it's a continuous necessity for life.