



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Western South Dakota WMD Complex
Sand Lake NWR/WMD
39650 Sand Lake Drive
Columbia, South Dakota 57433

February 13, 2026

Dear Agricultural Producer:

The Sand Lake Wetland Management District (WMD) is seeking operators to submit applications for grazing opportunities within the WMD. A map showing lands offered within the Sand Lake WMD is enclosed. Please familiarize yourself with the WMD Waterfowl Production Areas (WPA) that have been put forth for grazing. Please review the WPA maps and descriptions before submitting your application(s). Each grazing unit will have requirements for fencing (possibly boundary fence maintenance or replacement and/or internal electric fence), water (only if no source is available), and possible livestock rotation.

All applications will be opened on the same day and each applicant will be evaluated using a competitive ranking process. Applicants will be ranked by the WMD based on a series of questions included with the application(s). You may submit applications for multiple WPAs; however, only one WPA can be grazed. The exception to this will be if no other applications for a WPA are received, at which time an applicant who has already applied for and received a unit will be eligible for additional unit(s). If you have grazed more than one unit being offered in the past, please rank the units in your order of preference. Sand Lake WMD reserves the right to reject any or all applications that do not meet the requirements identified in the application. Furthermore, the Sand Lake WMD also reserves the right to reject applications from any operator that has previously violated the terms of grazing Special Use Permits (SUP).

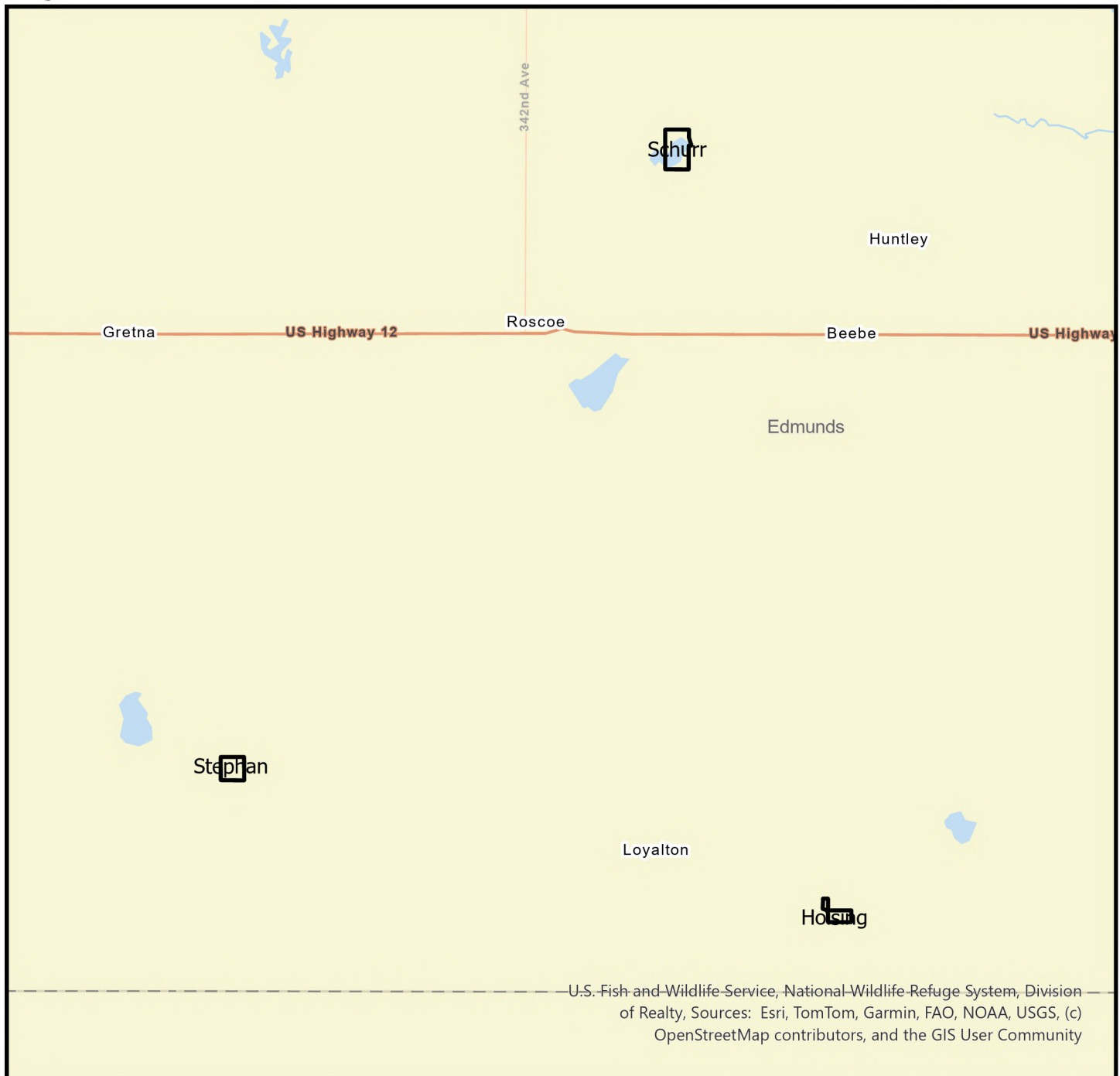
Selected operators will be notified by the WMD March 19, 2026. Successful applicants must complete a Cooperative Agricultural Agreement (CAA) with a Sand Lake WMD Refuge Manager within three weeks of notification, and before any livestock is released onto the grazing unit. The CAA will include the: (1) Commercial SUP and (2) an Annual Plan of Operations.

The application form can be submitted via the postal service, email, or hand-delivered to our office. Grazing applications will be accepted until **March 17, 2026**. Applications received or postmarked after March 17, 2026, will be returned unopened. Please mail to the address above, email (Noah_Hazard@fws.gov). Thank you for showing interest in our cooperative agriculture program and call me at (701) 403-6326 with any questions.

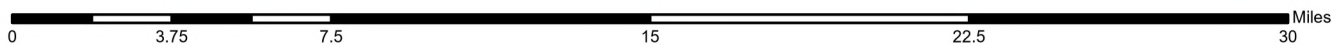
Sincerely,

Noah Hazard
Wildlife Refuge Specialist

Sand Lake Wetland Management District 2026 Grazing Units Edmunds County



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Wildlife Refuge System, Division of Realty, Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community



Sand Lake WMD

 WPA Boundary

Stephan South Waterfowl Production Area (WPA)- Edmunds County

You are applying to graze this unit for 2 years (2026 to 2027), and the AUM application rate is for the life of the Cooperative Agricultural Agreement (CAA). Every year the permittee will be required to develop an annual Plan of Operations with Sand Lake WMD. There will be a minimum of 110 AUMs in 2026, but the AUMs in 2027 will be determined during the annual Plan of Operations. Grazing will be conducted for 6 weeks (44 days) which can start as early as the May 1st

WPA Description and Conditions

The WPA is a total of 160 acres containing approximately 38 acres of wetland habitat. This WPA has a permanent fence around the exterior boundary that is in fair to good condition. Natural wetlands provide water and there is one dugout located in the southwest corner (see attached map for fence and water). Vegetation in the WPA consists of a combination of grasses and sedges including cool-season tame grass as well as some cool and warm-season native grass species.

Legal Description: T. 121 N., R 72., Section 12 (Madison Township)

Acres Available for Grazing: A minimum of 120 acres annually.

Lessor Responsibilities

Fencing: There is an electric fence along the south border of the WPA. Materials will be the responsibility of the permittee, and all electric fences will be removed one month after the final grazing date.

Water Source(s): The available sources will likely provide adequate amounts for livestock during the length of the grazing period, but this is not guaranteed and should be checked throughout the grazing period. If circumstances arise where water is inadequate, then water will need to be supplied by the permittee and deductions from grazing fees will be applied.

Salt and Minerals: Salt and mineral containers need to be moved throughout the grazing period and placed away from water sites.

Grazing Period: The permittee must make a good faith effort to follow the grazing days more so than the grazing dates. The permittee must make the Refuge Manager aware of such deviations from the planned grazing dates before adjustments occur. The permittee must maintain records of livestock stocking rates and grazing dates and provide them to the Refuge Manager within 15 days after the grazing period has concluded for the year.

Payment: The Sand Lake WMD will submit a bill to the Interior Business Center (IBC) by September 29th, then IBC will generate an invoice that will be sent to the permittee. Payment is due 30 days after the invoice is received and is accepted through a check or credit card.

****Please refer to the Special Conditions section for all other permittee responsibilities.***



Sand Lake Wetland Management District 2026 Grazing Units Stephan South WPA- Madison Township - Edmunds County



0 0.1 0.2 0.4 0.6 0.8 Miles

Sand Lake WMD

—●— SLWMD_Fence

WPA

Grazing Unit

Type of Animal	Number of Animals	Start Date	End Date	Days	AUM
Cow/Calf	65	5/1/2026	6/14/2026	44	112
Yearling	110	5/1/2026	6/14/2026	44	112

Schurr Waterfowl Production Area (WPA)- Edmunds County

You are applying to graze this unit for 2 years (2026 to 2027), and the AUM application rate is for the life of the Cooperative Agricultural Agreement (CAA). Every year the permittee will be required to develop an annual Plan of Operations with Sand Lake WMD. There will be a minimum of 105 AUMs in 2026, but the AUMs in 2027 will be determined during the annual Plan of Operations. Grazing will be conducted for 6 weeks (45 days) which can start as early as the May 1st

WPA Description and Conditions

The WPA is a total of 275 acres containing approximately 140 acres of wetland habitat. This WPA has a permanent fence around the two grazing units. The fence is in good condition. Natural wetlands should provide adequate water for livestock. Vegetation in the WPA consists of a combination of grasses and sedges including cool-season tame grass as well as some cool and warm-season native grass species. This unit does contain some toad flax, but grazing will occur prior to flowering.

Legal Description: T. 124 N., R 70., Section 34 (North Bryant Township)
T. 123 N., R 70., Section 03 (Bryant Township)

Acres Available for Grazing: A minimum of 130 acres annually.

Lessor Responsibilities

Fencing: Materials will be the responsibility of the permittee, and all electric fences will be removed one month after the final grazing date.

Water Source(s): The available sources will likely provide adequate amounts for livestock during the length of the grazing period, but this is not guaranteed and should be checked throughout the grazing period. If circumstances arise where water is inadequate, then water will need to be supplied by the permittee and deductions from grazing fees will be applied.

Salt and Minerals: Salt and mineral containers need to be moved throughout the grazing period and placed away from water sites.

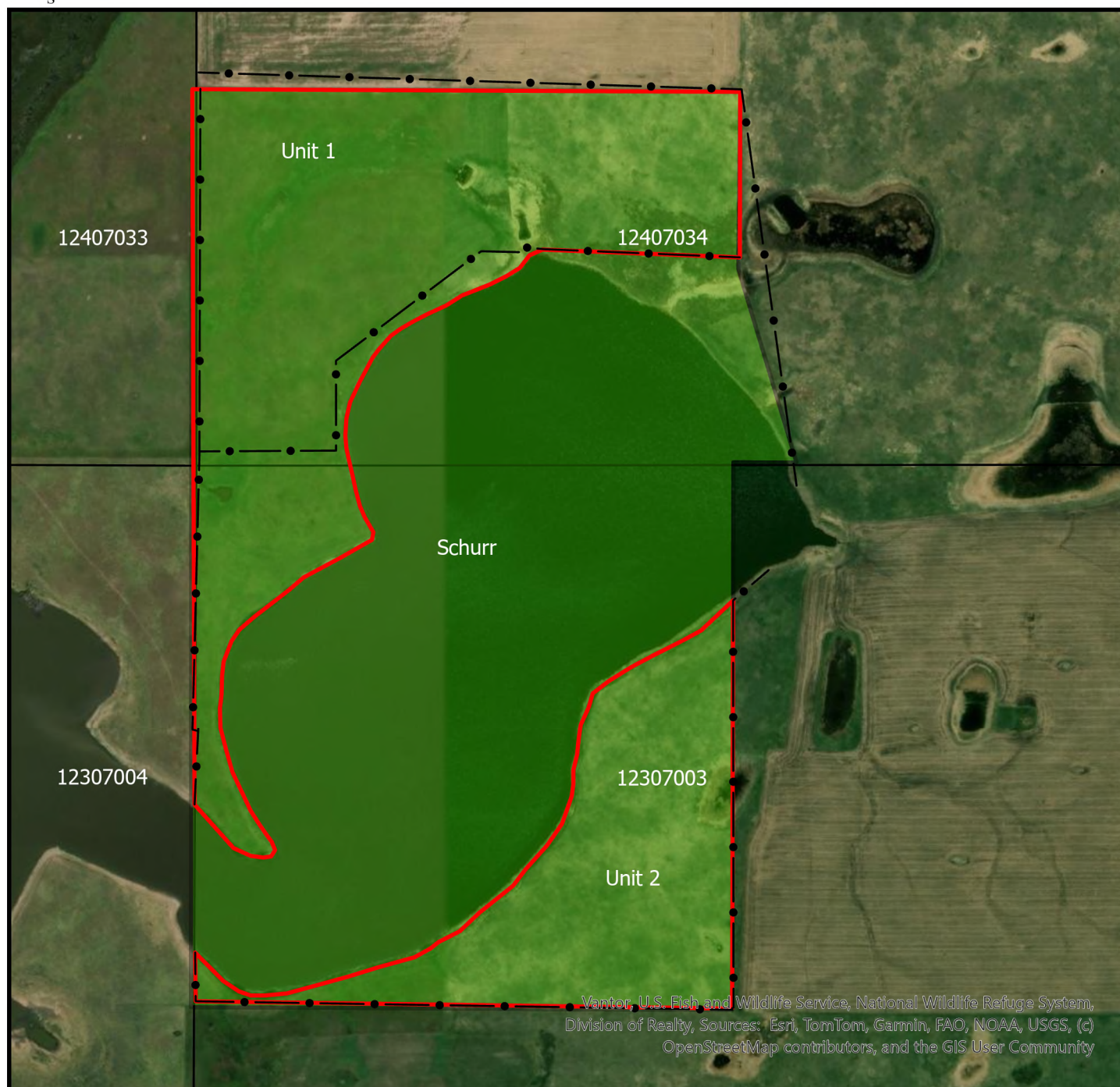
Rotation: Planned grazing rotation start and end dates are approximations and are a guide; it is understood by both parties that deviation from the planned dates will occur. The permittee must make a good-faith effort to follow the grazing days more so than the grazing dates. The permittee must make the Refuge Manager aware of such deviations from the planned grazing dates before changes occur. The permittee must maintain records of livestock stocking rates and grazing dates and provide them to the Refuge Manager within 15 days after the grazing period has concluded for the year.

Payment: The Sand Lake WMD will submit a bill to the Interior Business Center (IBC) by September 29th, then IBC will generate an invoice that will be sent to the permittee. Payment is due 30 days after the invoice is received and is accepted through a check or credit card.

****Please refer to the Special Conditions section for all other permittee responsibilities.***



Sand Lake Wetland Management District 2026 Grazing Unit Schurr WPA- North Bryant/Bryant Township - Edmunds County



0 0.15 0.3 0.6 0.9 1.2 Miles

Sand Lake WMD

—●— SLWMD_Fence

WPA

Grazing Unit

Type of Animal	Number of Animals	Unit 1		Unit 2		Days	AUM
		Start Date	End Date	Start Date	End Date		
Cow/Calf	60	5/1/2026	6/1/2026	6/1/2026	6/15/2026	45	105
Yearling	100	5/1/2026	6/1/2026	6/1/2026	6/15/2026	45	105

Holding Waterfowl Production Area (WPA)- Edmunds County

You are applying to graze this unit for 2 years (2026 to 2027), and the AUM application rate is for the life of the Cooperative Agricultural Agreement (CAA). Every year the permittee will be required to develop an annual Plan of Operations with Sand Lake WMD. There will be a minimum of 70 AUMs in 2026, but the AUMs in 2027 will be determined during the annual Plan of Operations. Grazing will be conducted for 6 weeks (44 days) which can start as early as the May 1st

WPA Description and Conditions

The WPA is a total of 98 acres containing approximately 25 acres of wetland habitat. This WPA has a permanent fence around the exterior boundary that is in fair condition. Natural wetlands should provide adequate water for livestock. Vegetation in the WPA consists of a combination of grasses and sedges including cool-season tame grass as well as some cool and warm-season native grass species.

Legal Description: T. 121 N., R 69., Section 30 (Liberty Township)

Acres Available for Grazing: A minimum of 70 acres annually.

Lessor Responsibilities

Fencing: Roughly 580 ft of temporary fence (i.e. electric, poly wire) will need to be constructed along the North boundary of the unit. Materials will be the responsibility of the permittee, and all temporary fences will be removed one month after the final grazing date. The existing exterior fence is in poor to fair condition. The USFWS can provide materials used for repairing permanent fences. Deductions for fence work will be taken from grazing fees.

Water Source(s): The available sources will likely provide adequate amounts for livestock during the length of the grazing period, but this is not guaranteed and should be checked throughout the grazing period. If circumstances arise where water is inadequate, then water will need to be supplied by the permittee and deductions from grazing fees will be applied.

Salt and Minerals: Salt and mineral containers need to be moved throughout the grazing period and placed away from water sites.

Grazing Period: The permittee must make a good faith effort to follow the grazing days more so than the grazing dates. The permittee must make the Refuge Manager aware of such deviations from the planned grazing dates before adjustments occur. The permittee must maintain records of livestock stocking rates and grazing dates and provide them to the Refuge Manager within 15 days after the grazing period has concluded for the year.

Payment: The Sand Lake WMD will submit a bill to the Interior Business Center (IBC) by September 29th, then IBC will generate an invoice that will be sent to the permittee. Payment is due 30 days after the invoice is received and is accepted through a check or credit card.

****Please refer to the Special Conditions section for all other permittee responsibilities.***



Sand Lake Wetland Management District 2026 Grazing Unit Holsing WPA - Liberty Township - Edmunds County



0 0.17 0.35 0.7 1.05 1.4 Miles

Sand Lake WMD

—●— SLWMD_Fence

WPA

Grazing Unit

Electric Fence

Type of Animal	Number of Animals	Start Date	End Date	Days	AUM
Cow/Calf	40	5/1/2026	6/14/2026	44	70
Yearling	70	5/1/2026	6/14/2026	44	70

Grazing Special Conditions

- To be eligible to apply you must be a current livestock owner/operator.
- The entire amount of AUM's specified must be utilized during the period specified. More livestock for a shorter period will be allowed upon mutual agreement between the permittee and the WMD.
- Confinement of livestock to the unit is the responsibility of the permittee as is any damage to surrounding lands caused by the permittee's livestock.
- You are responsible for the care of your livestock, i.e., moving them on the specified dates and into the correct pastures, ensuring they have water, etc. You are liable for any damage to neighboring lands should your livestock escape the WPA. All liability relating to livestock and livestock management to include all persons working for the permittee, whether related, hired or as a partner is strictly that of the permittee as listed on the SUP.
- The permittee is responsible for all existing permanent and electric fence maintenance and repairs. The USFWS can provide materials used for a new or replacement permanent fence greater than a quarter mile or deduct the material costs from the grazing fee after receipts are provided. All permanent fences will become the property of the USFWS after the grazing agreement has expired. Temporary electric cross fences remain the property of the permittee and are to be removed one month after the removal of livestock.
- If permanent fence installation is needed, it will be required that the permittee follow the fence specifications of the USFWS. All new fences will have 4 strands of 12-gauge barbed wire; H-braces (if replaced) will be (2) 8-inch posts with associated cross-post and 9-gauge smooth wire; gates (if replaced) will be 4 strand wire with stays, and the maximum spacing for steel posts will be 16 feet.
- Natural water sources may exist on each WPA. Known water sources will be indicated on maps for each WPA. It is the permittee's responsibility to check the condition of the water sources. If water sources are inadequate, the permittee will need to provide water. Costs associated with providing water should be considered by the permittee before applying.
- The use of salt and minerals are allowed but should be located away from water sources to reduce overuse of the area by livestock. Mineral must be moved at the same time the livestock are rotated. All minerals must be removed at the end of the grazing period.
- All private property, including containers for minerals, salt, or other supplemental feeds or feeders, must be removed at the end of the grazing period.
- With the exception of ear tags, no insecticide may be used on livestock while they are on the WPA. Treatment may be done before livestock are brought to the WPA.
- The permittee must own at least 50% of the livestock that are to be grazed under the permit.

If you use another person's livestock, you can only collect the same dollar amount per AUM₆ as you are being charged by the USFWS. As the person named on the permit, you are responsible for 100% of the livestock grazed, the amount paid, and compliance with all conditions of this permit. Subletting is not permitted. **We urge you not to increase the size of your herd based on the availability or the expectation of annually grazing FWS lands.**

- The permittee must notify the Refuge Manager of deceased livestock. Deceased livestock must be removed from the WPA within 48 hours of discovery.
- Any damage to government property must be reported to the local Refuge Manager immediately and replaced by the permittee.
- All liability relating to livestock and livestock management, including all persons working for the permittee, is strictly that of the permittee listed on the CAA.
- The Permittee must comply with all state and local livestock health regulations.
- The permittee must maintain records of livestock stocking rates and grazing dates and provide them to the Refuge Manager within 15 days after the grazing period has concluded for the year.

THE USFWS RESERVES THE RIGHT TO MODIFY OR TERMINATE THE CAA IF HABITAT CONDITIONS WARRANT. IF CHANGES TO THE PERMIT ARE DEEMED NECESSARY, THE PERMITTEE AGREES TO AAPPLICATIONE BY THE CHANGES OR THE PERMIT WILL BE VOIDED. THE PERMITTEE WILL BE NOTIFIED AHEAD OF TIME IF ANY SUCH CHANGES ARE IMPLEMENTED.

ANY VIOLATION OF THE ABOVE REGULATIONS MAY RESULT IN THE IMMEDIATE CANCELLATION OF YOUR GRAZING PERMIT AND FORFEITURE OF FUTURE APPLICATIONDING ON GRAZING UNITS.

To apply please submit the Sand Lake WMD application form and the ranking questionnaire. 7
Please turn in your applications to the FWS Sand Lake Wetland Management District office no
later than **March 17th, 2026**. **All envelopes must be marked WPA Grazing Application in the
lower left-hand corner of the envelope.** Applications will be received in person or by:

Mail: Sand Lake WMD
39650 Sand Lake Drive
Columbia, SD 57433
e-mail: Noah_Hazard@fws.gov

For any questions or further information please contact me (701) 403-6326 at the Sand Lake
Wetland Management District.

Grazing Fee Rates

The permittee will be charged \$1 over rates consistent with the South Dakota State University
Extension Report Grazing Rental Rate Survey for 2024. Grazing fee rates will be for the term of
the CAA and annual stocking rates (AUMS) are specified on the annual Plan of Operations.

Examples of how to calculate stocking rates:

The stocking rate for cow/calf pairs, using 180 AUM's (Animal Unit Months), 1.2 AUE (Animal Unit
Equivalents), and the grazing period ratio of 42 days/30.5 days= 1.38 months

Step 1: AUM's / AUE → 180 AUM's / 1.2 AUE = 150 Animals

Step 2: Number of Animals/Grazing Period → 150 Animals/1.38 Months= 109 cow/calf pairs

The stocking rate for yearlings, using 180 AUM's (Animal Unit Months) and 0.7 AUE (Animal Unit
Equivalents)

Step 1: AUM's / AUE → 180 AUM's / 0.7 AUE = 257 Animals

Step 2: Number of Animals/Grazing Period → 257 Animals/1.38 Months= 186 yearlings

Stocking Requirements: Sand Lake Wetland Management District will use 1.2 AUE's (Animal
Unit Equivalents) to define a cow with a nursing calf less than 6 months of age. Other livestock
will have AUE rates calculated according to the chart below.

Animal Unit Equivalents:

1 mature cow	1.0 AUE
1 cow/calf pair	1.2 AUE
1 bull	1.5 AUE
1 weaner calf.....	0.6 AUE
1 yearling (9-18 months).....	0.7 AUE

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip _____

Telephone Number: _____

Name of Waterfowl Production Area and Rank*: _____ Rank _____

Name of Waterfowl Production Area and Rank*: _____ Rank _____

(*If you are applying for multiple WPAs please rank your preferences- 1 being the highest, 2 being the second highest)

Grazing rate fee per AUM: \$36 (qualifying deductions may apply)

Competitive Ranking Factors

Please check Yes or No to the following questions and return with the application.

Have you ever been involved with the planning and/or grazing management of this unit?

Yes _____ No _____

- If not, have you ever been involved with the planning and/or grazing management on Sand Lake National Wildlife Refuge or WPA within Sand Lake Wetland Management District (WMD)?

Yes _____ No _____

- Have you ever been involved with the planning and/or grazing management of any Refuge or WPA in the Dakotas? Year Grazed?

Yes _____ No _____ Year _____

Have you ever had grazing privileges revoked by the USFWS?

- If yes, please explain when privileges were revoked and the circumstances that led to privileges being revoked.

Yes _____ No _____ Year _____

What is the approximate distance from land you own or rent from the WPA?

9

**Please check what best describes the closest parcel of land you own or lease:*

- Shared boundary with the grazing unit being offered _____
- 1 to 3 miles from the grazing unit being offered _____
- 4 to 10 miles from the grazing unit being offered _____
- >11 miles from the grazing unit being offered _____

Required: What is the location of the nearest pastureland you own or rent?

Township _____ Range _____ Section _____ Quarter _____

Are you willing to maintain fences and use and remove temporary fences?

Yes _____ No _____

Are you willing to do significant quality repairs to permanent fences? Please explain

Yes _____ No _____

Are you willing to provide water to a grazing unit that may not have a reliable water source?

Yes _____ No _____

Are you able to respond to an animal or infrastructure emergency within 2 hours (e.g., cattle outside unit)?

Yes _____ No _____

Do you have the number of livestock available for this unit that is required in the grazing plan?

Yes _____ No _____

Can you demonstrate that you have implemented a rotational grazing program in the past on your own or rented land?

Yes _____ No _____

Are you willing to communicate with USFWS Service management staff before and during the grazing period? Additionally, are you willing to adhere to prescribed grazing management practices based on vegetation utilization, which may vary from year to year?

**Examples of prescribed grazing practices are rotating cattle in a timely manner as directed, grazing during time periods determined in the plan or operations, and grazing the number of days specified by the manager.*

Yes _____ No _____

Are you able to mow the ROW adjacent to the maintained county or township road as well as any WPA parking areas as requested by the USFWS?

Yes _____ No _____

I certify that all information provided above is true to the best of my knowledge and I meet all qualifying standards for this application. I further understand that selection as a permittee is not a guarantee of grazing rights on waterfowl production areas and can be canceled by either party with 45 days' notice if either party is not carrying out their roles and responsibilities of the agreement.

Printed Name

Signature

Date

Qualifying Deductions with verification-

- Deductible expenses may be the cost of materials, labor, equipment, or infrastructure necessary to implement practices within the management unit e.g., fixing existing boundary fence
- Grass and forb seed
- Fencing materials, fence removal/construction including the installation and removal of electric fence
- Hauling and pumping water
- Livestock watering infrastructure maintenance, repair, or installation
- Livestock rotations and transportation as directed by the annual Plan of Operations
- Onsite livestock herder(s)