

Conservation Implementation Strategy Project

Resilient Forest Landscapes - Custer County "Custer Highlands-Elk Mountain Priority Area"



For more information, go to:

<https://bit.ly/SDNRCS-CIS>

The Conservation Implementation Strategy (CIS) is a new phased-in approach to deliver conservation programs to farmers and ranchers across South Dakota. Funding for CIS comes through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). Funding and support from other agencies and groups can be leveraged and coordinated to focus on mutual issues of the highest priority.

This Project At-A-Glance

Partners

Custer County Weed and Pest Department
SD Department of Agriculture-
Division of Resource Conservation and Forestry
SD Department of Agriculture-
Wildland Fire Division
Elk Mountain Volunteer Fire Department, Elk Mountain, WY
Elk Mountain Public School
Custer County Emergency Management
USDA-Forest Service, Black Hills National Forest
National Wild Turkey Federation

Funding for this project is provided by the EQIP Program and partners with financial and in-kind contributions.

Contact
Caley Buckert, Office Manager
cbuckert@custercountycd.com
(605) 673-5680



Background

Much of the western, upland portion of Custer County is forested. Many acres are over stocked with ponderosa pine trees and thus prone to insect epidemics and moderate to severe wildfire that can destroy property and reduce natural resource values. Since 2000, about 173,000 acres have burned within the forested, western half of Custer County, and about 148,000 acres of that immediately surrounds the Custer Highlands-Elk Mountain Priority Area.

Resource Concern(s)

Fuel loadings have created wildfire hazard that poses risk to human safety, structures, plants, animals, and air resources. Plant communities lack adequate diversity, composition, and structure to support desired ecological functions and/or management objectives. Excessive pest damage to plants including that from undesired plants, diseases, and animals. Quantity, quality, or connectivity of food, cover, space, shelter, and/or water is inadequate to meet requirements of identified wildlife and invertebrate species.

Goal

This project area was selected because of forest successional trends, fire history, and expansion of the wildland-urban interface. The Custer Highlands-Elk Mountain priority area has noted property/home development and fire occurrence in the last 20 years and is adjacent to treatments planned on adjacent national forest land.

Desired Results

Most of the National Forest System land in the Custer Highlands-Elk Mountain priority area will be thinned and prescribe burned to reduce fuel hazard. Land treatments will address invasive weeds and reduced fire hazards around homes and property to meet *Firewise* standards.

South Dakota
**Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service**