

# Speak up about Sodsaver program

## Our Say

If you don't like Swampbuster, you're going to hate its new cousin — Sodsaver.

Sodsaver is a new provision in the 2008 Farm Bill that prohibits you from buying federal crop insurance for five years on land you convert from native sod. It applies to the Prairie Pothole National Priority Area, which includes most of the eastern Dakotas.

In an unusual twist for a farm bill, governors get to decide whether or not to enroll their states in the program.

The purpose of Sodsaver is to help protect soil and preserve waterfowl nesting habitat.

"Farmers can convert grassland to cropland," one wildlife conservationist told me, "but they shouldn't be able reduce their risk with tax-subsidized crop insurance."

### Don't enroll

The South Dakota Corn Growers Association and South Dakota Farm Bureau are urging Gov. Mike Rounds to not enroll South Dakota in the program.

Bill Chase, a Wolsey, S.D., farmer and SDCGA president, says that the program will put eastern South Dakota farmers at a disadvantage to farmers who have complete freedom to respond to market

## Key Points

- Dakota governors shouldn't enroll states in Sodsaver.
- Wildlife groups are too quick to pass laws to achieve goals.
- An incentive program would treat farmers more fairly.

signals.

Scott VanderWal, a Volga, S.D., farmer and SDFB president, says Sodsaver is an overly broad national policy. Truly sensitive areas need to be identified locally by the native grass on them, rainfall, soil type, and the environmental sensitivity of the soil to erosion from wind and water. "Simply looking at a map of the nation and designating wide swaths of the country is a disservice to everyone," VanderWal says.

### Incentive better

Preserving waterfowl nesting habitat is a worthy goal, but I think an incentive program would be a better approach.

Wildlife groups are often too quick to pass a law when they think they are right. They don't have all the answers all the time, and — in this case — they should work with farm organizations to raise money from public and private sources to create a positive program.

Gov. Rounds and Gov. Hoeven should not enroll South Dakota and North



Dakota in Sodsaver. They might take the South Dakota Farm Bureau's suggestion and offer to enroll the states in a pilot incentive program or an enhancement of the Conservation Reserve Program.

### Speak up

Tell officials what you think about Sodsaver.

Contact your governor:

■ **North Dakota:** Gov. John Hoeven, 600 East Boulevard Ave., Bismarck, ND 58505-0001; phone: 701-328-2200, e-mail: [governor@nd.gov](mailto:governor@nd.gov).

■ **South Dakota:** Gov. Mike Rounds, 500 E. Capitol Ave., Pierre, SD 57501; phone: 605-773-3212. Go to the Web site [www.state.sd.us/governor](http://www.state.sd.us/governor) to submit an e-mail.

USDA is taking comments on Sodsaver

until Jan. 23. Submit comments titled "2008 Farm Bill Interim Rule" by e-mail to [DirectorPDD@rma.usda.gov](mailto:DirectorPDD@rma.usda.gov) or by mail to: Director, Product Administration and Standards Division, Risk Management Agency, USDA Beacon Facility, Mail Stop 0812 Room 421, PO Box 419205, Kansas City, MO 64141-6205. (Use the street address "9240 Troost Ave." rather than the Mail Stop or Box Number for Express Mail or Fed Ex.)



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