

WETLANDS -A VALUABLE RESOURCE FOR FARMERS

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Wetlands have generally been discounted as a valuable natural resource by the farm community. The Prairie Pothole Region of eastern South Dakota retains many original wetlands - other parts of the nation are not so fortunate. A comprehensive study evaluating the interrelationships between wetlands and three different agricultural systems (organic, low-input, and conventional) has begun in South Dakota with a multidisciplinary team and cooperation from farmers. This study will attempt to uncover possible soil water advantages provided by wetlands to upland crops. It will also look at nitrate and water movement using environmentally safe tracers. Water budgets, evapotranspiration, water table level, and yields are all included in agronomic parameters to be analyzed. Establishment of wetland best management practices (BMP's) and their potential in agricultural systems will be developed. This study should provide valuable information regarding a sustainable resource for farmers -wetlands.

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