

# **Belle Fourche River Watershed Management and Project Implementation Plan Segment 6**

**319 Watershed Project  
October 1, 2012**

Sponsored By:

Belle Fourche River Watershed Partnership

Submitted to:

South Dakota Department of  
Environment and Natural Resources  
Pierre, South Dakota 57501

**PROJECT SUMMARY SHEET**

**PROJECT TITLE:** Belle Fourche River Watershed Management and Project Implementation Plan  
Segment 6

**NAME AND ADDRESS OF LEAD PROJECT SPONSOR:**

Belle Fourche River Watershed Partnership  
1837 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Belle Fourche, SD 57717

**STATE CONTACT PERSON:** Mr. Lee Baron

**TITLE:** Natural Resources Engineer

**EMAIL:** Lee.Baron@state.sd.us

**PHONE:** 605.773.5092                      **FAX:** 605.773.4068

**STATE:** South Dakota                      **WATERSHED:** Belle Fourche River Watershed

**HYDROLOGIC UNIT CODE:** 101202

**HIGH PRIORITY WATERSHED** (yes/no) Yes

**PROJECT TYPES:** [ ] BASE [  ] WATERSHED [ ] GROUNDWATER [ ] I&E

**WATERBODY TYPES**

- [  ] GROUNDWATER
- [  ] LAKES/RESERVOIRS
- [  ] RIVERS
- [  ] STREAMS
- [  ] WETLANDS
- [ ] OTHER

**NPS CATEGORY**

- [  ] AGRICULTURE
- [ ] URBAN RUNOFF
- [ ] SILVICULTURE
- [ ] CONSTRUCTION
- [ ] RESOURCE EXTRACTION
- [ ] HYDRAULIC MODIFICATION
- [ ] OTHER

**Project Location: Latitude:** 45 N **Longitude:** -101 W

**SUMMARIZATION OF GOALS:** The original project goal is to bring the Belle Fourche River into compliance for total suspended solids (TSS) and *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) by implementing the recommended Best Management Practices (BMPs) by 2014 and implementing additional BMP recommendations from other Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) studies for waterbodies within the watershed as they become available. This project will exceed the 2014 timeline and a new 5-year plan is being developed to analyze the effectiveness of BMP implementation to focus the efforts of the project on securing the compliance of the Belle Fourche River with its assigned beneficial uses. A TMDL for *E. coli* has been approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and this project segment will begin implementing BMPs targeting *E. coli* reduction in the upper reach of the Belle Fourche River. The goal of this project segment, as set forth in the Belle Fourche River Watershed TMDL study includes:

- Continuing implementation of BMPs in the watershed to reduce TSS 18 milligrams/liter (mg/L) reduction below the Belle Fourche Reservoir and 22 mg/L above the Belle Fourche River Reservoir.
- Beginning implementation of BMPs to reduce *E. coli* in the Belle Fourche River.
- Developing a Stormwater Management Plan for the city of Belle Fourche.
- Continuing public education and outreach to stakeholders within the Belle Fourche River Watershed.
- Continuing to track the progress made toward reaching the goals of the TMDL to ensure that BMPs are effective and that the proper BMPs are implemented.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** The Belle Fourche River Watershed Partnership is the project sponsor for this 2-year project. This is the sixth segment of seven planned project segments that address a cluster of seven TMDLs. Completion of the activities planned for this segment will begin implementing BMPs that reduce *E. coli* and advance the BMP implementation for TSS pollutants to 70 percent complete. These BMPs include: (1) installing irrigation control units, (2) irrigation canal modeling, (3) lining irrigation canals, (4) replacing irrigation ditches with pipelines, (5) installing irrigation sprinkler systems, (6) implementing grazing management systems, (7) installing riparian vegetation improvements, (8) clean water diversion, (9) relocating livestock feeding grounds, and (10) developing alternatives for stormwater management.

<b>FISCAL YEAR</b>	2013–2015
<b>319 FUNDS:</b>	\$1,195,000
<b>TOTAL PROJECT COST:</b>	\$4,947,900
<b>MATCH:</b>	\$1,038,500
<b>319 FUNDED FULL-TIME PERSONNEL:</b>	2

## **2.0 STATEMENT OF NEED**

**2.1** The Belle Fourche River Watershed Partnership (BFRWP) developed and implemented an assessment project to determine the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for the Belle Fourche River. The project started during April 2001. The purpose of the assessment was to: (1) assess the current physical, chemical, and biological integrity of the Belle Fourche River and its tributaries; (2) determine the sources of total suspended solids (TSS) in the Belle Fourche River Watershed; and (3) define management prescriptions for identified nonpoint-source critical areas in the watershed. The draft TMDL was completed during 2003 and approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 2005. The TMDL report includes: the Belle Fourche River and Horse Creek. The TMDL approved by the EPA addresses a cluster of TMDLs.

The Belle Fourche River is identified in the 1998 and 2002 *South Dakota 303(d) Waterbody Lists* and the 2004 and 2006 *Integrated Report for Surface Water Quality Assessment (IR)* as impaired because of elevated TSS concentrations. According to the 2006 IR, the Belle Fourche River from the Wyoming border to the Cheyenne River, South Dakota, failed to support its assigned uses because of high TSS concentrations. In the report, agricultural activities were listed as a probable source of occasional impairment. This report also states that a natural source of TSS may be the erosion of exposed shale beds that lie along the river and its tributaries. The 2008 IR shows that all segments of the Belle Fourche River, with the exception of the segment from the Wyoming border to Fruitdale, were delisted after water-quality standards for TSS were met. The 2010 IR reports that four out of the five stream segments are listed as nonsupporting for TSS warm-water permanent fish life assigned beneficial use. Table 2-1 contains a summary of the TMDL segments within the Belle Fourche River Watershed that are listed as impaired for TSS, fecal coliform, *E. coli*, and specific conductance in the 2012 IR. The table also lists the impaired beneficial use, impairment parameter, water-quality data, and possible source.

Horse Creek was listed in the 1998 impaired waterbody list for TSS and that was later determined to be a listing error. The Horse Creek listing was corrected to conductivity during 2002. During this assessment, approximately 10 percent of the samples collected from Horse Creek exceeded the water-quality standard for TSS. The 2012 IR lists Horse Creek as nonsupporting for conductivity and delisted for TSS. The TMDL report for Horse Creek includes both TSS and conductivity.

The Belle Fourche River from the Wyoming border to the Redwater River was first listed for pathogens in the 2002 South Dakota Report to Congress 305 (b) Water Quality Assessment and continued to be listed for fecal coliform in successive IRs (2004, 2006, 2008, and 2010) failing to support its immersion recreation beneficial use because of elevated levels of *E. coli*. The South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources (SD DENR) developed a TMDL in 2012 that identified livestock, wildlife, and stormwater from the city of Belle Fourche as potential sources of *E. coli* impairments in the watershed.

Implementation of the TSS BMPs recommended in the Belle Fourche River TMDL began during 2004. The first year of implementation included funding from local ranchers and farmers, BFRWP, Lawrence County, Belle Fourche Irrigation District (BFID), Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality (WY DEQ), National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). Two products of the project

**Table 2-1. Summary of Belle Fourche River Watershed Exceedance Water-Quality Data from 2012 Integrated Report**

Stream	Stream Reach	Beneficial Use	Impairment Parameter	Water-Quality Criteria	Source
Bear Butte Creek	Headwaters to Strawberry Creek	Cold-Water Permanent Fish Life	Water Temperature (°F)	<65°F	Natural Source
Bear Butte Creek	Strawberry Creek to S2, T4N, R4E	Cold-Water Permanent Fish Life	Water Temperature (°F)	<65°F	Natural Source
Belle Fourche River	Wyoming Border to Redwater River, South Dakota	Immersion Recreation	Fecal Coliform (per/100 mL)	200 <sup>(a)</sup> /400 <sup>(b)</sup>	Wildlife, Livestock
		Immersion Recreation	<i>E. coli</i>	126 <sup>(a)</sup> /235 <sup>(b)</sup>	Wildlife, Livestock
		Warm-Water Permanent Fish Life	TSS (mg/L)	90 <sup>(a)</sup> /158 <sup>(b)</sup>	Crop Production/ Livestock
Belle Fourche River	Redwater River to Whitewood Creek	Warm-Water Permanent Fish Life	TSS (mg/L)	90 <sup>(a)</sup> /158 <sup>(b)</sup>	Crop Production/ Livestock
Belle Fourche River	Whitewood Creek to Willow Creek	Warm-Water Permanent Fish Life	TSS (mg/L)	90 <sup>(a)</sup> /158 <sup>(b)</sup>	NA
Belle Fourche River	Willow Creek to Alkali Creek	Warm-Water Permanent Fish Life	TSS (mg/L)	90 <sup>(a)</sup> /158 <sup>(b)</sup>	NA
Belle Fourche River	Alkali Creek to Mouth	Immersion Recreation	Fecal Coliform (per/100 mL)	200 <sup>(a)</sup> /400 <sup>(b)</sup>	Livestock
		Immersion Recreation	<i>E. coli</i>	126 <sup>(a)</sup> /235 <sup>(b)</sup>	Livestock
		Limited Contact Recreation	Fecal Coliform (per/100 mL)	1,000 <sup>(a)</sup> /2,000 <sup>(b)</sup>	Livestock
		Limited Contact Recreation	<i>E. coli</i>	630 <sup>(a)</sup> /1,178 <sup>(b)</sup>	Livestock
		Warm-Water Permanent Fish Life	TSS (mg/L)	90 <sup>(a)</sup> /158 <sup>(b)</sup>	NA
Redwater River	Wyoming Border to US HWY 85	Cold-Water Permanent Fish Life	Water Temperature (°F)	<65°F	Natural Source
Strawberry Creek	Bear Butte Creek to S5, T4N, R4E	Fish/Wildlife Prop. Rec. Stock Waters	Cadmium (mg/L)	(c)	Mining Impacts
Stream	Stream Reach	Beneficial Use	Impairment Parameter	Water-Quality Criteria	Source
Whitewood Creek	Deadwood Creek to Spruce Gulch	Immersion Recreation	<i>E. coli</i>	200 <sup>(a)</sup> /400 <sup>(b)</sup>	NA
Whitewood Creek	Spruce Gulch to Sandy Creek	Immersion Recreation	<i>E. coli</i>	200 <sup>(a)</sup> /400 <sup>(b)</sup>	NA
Whitewood Creek	Sandy Creek to I-90	Cold-Water Marginal Fish Life	pH	6.5–8.8	Natural Sources
Whitewood Creek	I-90 to Crow Creek	Warm-Water Permanent Fish Life	pH	6.5–9.0	NA
Whitewood Creek	Crow Creek to Mouth	Warm-Water Permanent Fish Life	TSS (mg/L)	90 <sup>(a)</sup> /158 <sup>(b)</sup>	NA

(a) 30-day average.

(b) Daily maximum.

(c) Cadmium concentration  $< (1.136672 - [\ln(\text{hardness}) \times 0.041838]) \times \exp[1.128 \times (\ln(\text{hardness})] - 3.828)$ .

were the *Ten-Year Belle Fourche River Watershed Strategic Implementation Plan* (10-Year Plan) and the *Belle Fourche Irrigation District Water Conservation Plan* (5-Year Plan). These two plans outline the work that will be completed in the watershed during the next several years to meet the TMDLs. In the reports, the associated TSS and nonused water savings are presented for each BMP planned. Table 2-2 and Table 2-3 list the BMPs installed above and below the reservoir, respectively, to date. The tables also show the total planned number of each BMP to be installed in this segment. Segments 1, 2, 3, and 4 were completed on schedule and within budget. Segment 5 is on schedule to be completed in June 2013.

**Table 2-2. Best Management Practices Installed and Scheduled Above the Belle Fourche Reservoir**

Best Management Practice	Planned for Segment 6	Amount Implemented October 2012	Total Amount Scheduled From 10-Year Plan
Flow Automation Units (number)	0	2	2
Upgraded Water Card and Water Order System <sup>(a)</sup>	Complete	Phase III	Three Phases
Portable Stage/Flow-Measuring Devices (number)	0	0	3
Real-Time Stage Flow-Measuring Devices (number)	0	1	3
Alternative Keyhole Water Delivery Study	0	0	1
Alternative Keyhole Water Supply Method	0	0	1
Nonused Water Storage Pond (number)	0	0	1
Inlet Canal Lining (feet)	0	7,760	10,560
Pipeline Projects Delivering Water to Fields (feet)	0	7,382	500
Irrigation Sprinkler Systems (number)	5	5	2
Scheduling of Irrigation Water <sup>(a)</sup>	Complete	1	1
Managed Riparian Grazing (acres)	2,500	10,863	14,750
Public Meetings <sup>(a)</sup> (number)	8	32	40
Project Tours <sup>(a)</sup> (number)	2	8	8

(a) BMPs are the same for both above and below the reservoir.

The 10-Year Plan includes a TSS reduction schedule. The BMPs installed to date have resulted in an estimated 119 milligrams per liter (mg/L) above the reservoir and 90 mg/L below the reservoir for a total of 164 mg/L reduction in TSS (Table 2-4). The goal of the 10-Year Plan was to reduce TSS by 357 mg/L, including 249 mg/L above and 108 mg/L below the reservoir. A reduction of 209 mg/L translates to 59 percent achievement of the goal since the project was initiated. Currently, a new 5-year plan is being developed that focuses implementation efforts on addressing TSS issues in the watershed and incorporating *E. coli* BMPs.

2.2 The Belle Fourche Watershed is shown in Figure 2-1. The ecoregions in the watershed include: Black Hills Foothills, Black Hills Plateau, Black Hills Core Highlands, River Breaks, Semiarid Pierre Shale Plains, Dense Clay Prairie, and Missouri Plateau. The Belle Fourche River is a tributary to the Cheyenne River.

The Belle Fourche River is a tributary to the Cheyenne River. Currently, 14 stream segments in the Belle Fourche River Watershed are listed in the South Dakota 2012 IR as impairment-related TMDL waters. These include Bear Butte Creek (two listings), Belle Fourche River (five listings), Redwater River (one listing), Strawberry Creek (one listing), and Whitewood Creek (five listings).

**Table 2-3. Best Management Practices Installed and Scheduled Below the Belle Fourche Reservoir**

Best Management Practice	Planned for Segment 6	Amount Implemented October 2012	Total Amount Scheduled From 10-Year Plan
Flow Automation Units (number)	8	35	40
Upgraded Water Card and Water Order System <sup>(a)</sup>	Complete	Phase III	Three Phases
Portable Stage/Flow-Measuring Devices (number)	0	6	12
Real-Time Stage Flow-Measuring Devices (number)	0	8	12
Line Open Canals and Laterals (feet)	1,000	2,600	16,000
Replace Open Canals and Laterals With Pipelines (feet)	1,000	14,514	25,000
Nonused Water Storage Pond (number)	0	0	2
Pipeline Projects Delivering Water to Fields (feet)	15,000	33,907	8,500
Irrigation Sprinkler Systems (number)	25	39	34
Scheduling of Irrigation Water <sup>(a)</sup>	0	1	1
Managed Riparian Grazing (acres)	2,500	18,775	19,250
Public Meetings <sup>(a)</sup> (number)	8	36	40
Project Tours <sup>(a)</sup> (number)	2	10	8

(a) BMPs are the same for both above and below the reservoir.

**Table 2-4. Total Suspended Solids Reduction (mg/L)**

Location of Reductions	TSS Reductions to Date	TSS Reductions Planned for Segment 6	Planned TSS Reductions in the 10-Year Plan
Above the Reservoir	119	22	249
Below the Reservoir	90	18	108
Combined TSS Reductions	209	40	357

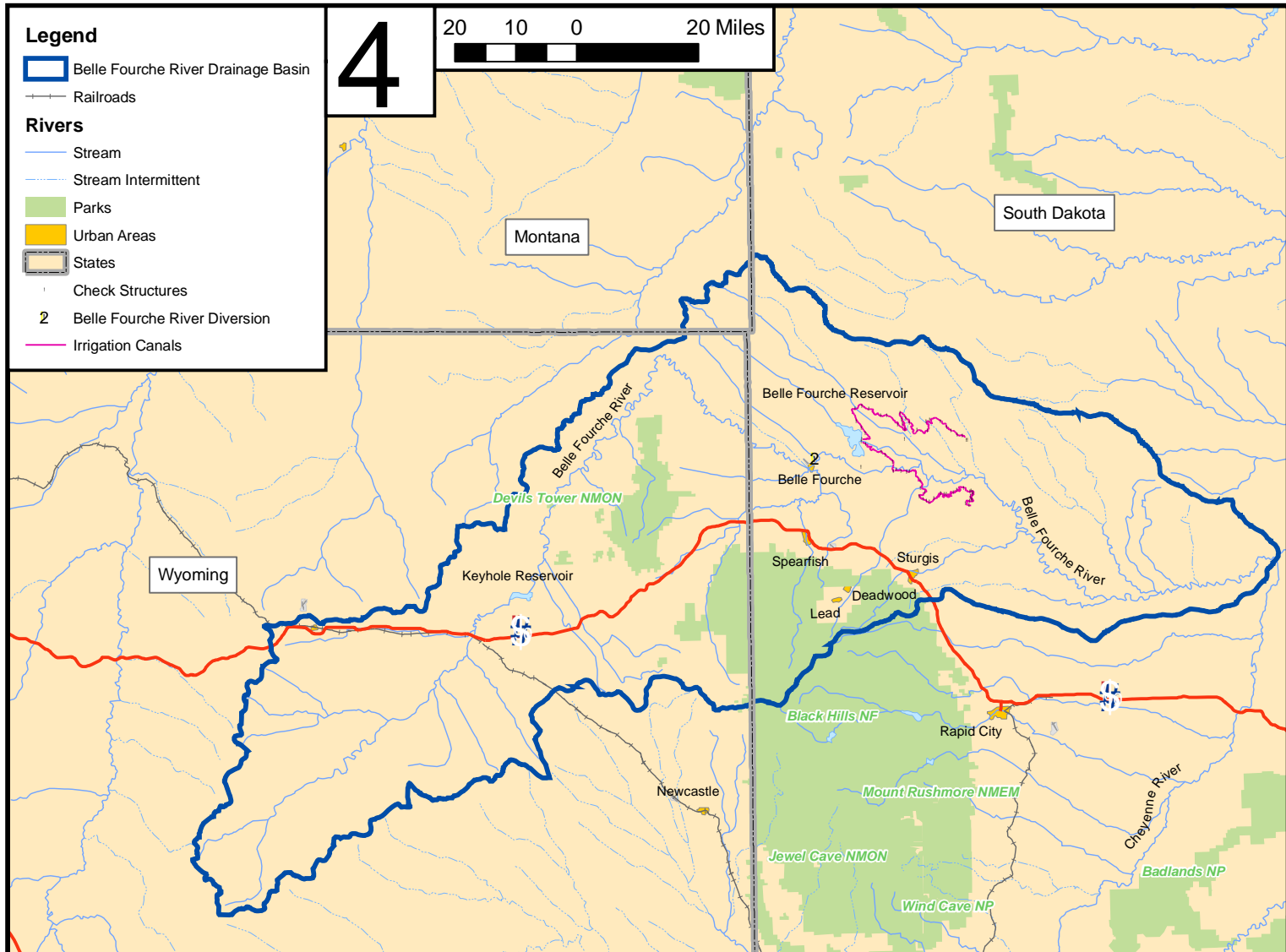


Figure 2-1. Location of the Belle Fourche River Watershed.



The BMPs that will be installed during this project segment are consistent with the schedules in the 10-Year Watershed Plan and the 5-Year Irrigation Plan. Currently, a new 5-year plan is being developed that focuses BMP implementation on reducing TSS and incorporating *E. coli*. The BMPs planned are described in Section 3.0 of this proposal and will reduce the TSS in the Belle Fourche River by approximately 22 mg/L and 18 mg/L above and below the Belle Fourche Reservoir, respectively (Table 2-4). This level of reduction is consistent with what is presented in the 10-Year Plan.

The surface area of the South Dakota portion of the Belle Fourche River encompasses approximately 2,103,040 acres and includes Hydraulic Units 10120201, 10120202, and 10120203. The city of Spearfish (population 8,606) is the largest municipality located in the Belle Fourche River Watershed. Other small communities in the watershed include Belle Fourche (population 4,565), Sturgis (population 4,442), Lead (population 3,027), Deadwood (population 1,380), Newell (population 646), Nisland (population 204), and Fruitdale (population 62).

Land use in the watershed is primarily livestock grazing with some cropland and a few urban and suburban areas. Wheat, alfalfa, native and tame grasses, and hay are the main crops. Corn, wheat, and barley are grown within the BFID. Some winter animal feeding areas are located in the watershed. Gold mining, while reduced in scope from the past, is conducted in some headwater areas of the watershed, and some of the land is used for silviculture. Approximately 11 percent of the watershed is U.S. Forest Service land, primarily the Black Hills National Forest, and 4 percent is Bureau of Land Management land.

Major soil associations found in the watershed include: Winler-Lismas, Pierre-Kyle, Grummit-Shale, Epsie, Midway-Penrose, Cabbart-Absher, Butche-Colby, Arvada-Stetter, Lohmiller-Glenberg-Haverson, Caputa-Satanta, Delphill-Assinniboine, Nunn-Satanta-Zigweid, Blackpipe-Savo-Manvel, Blackpipe-Assinniboine-Savo, Canyon-Lakoa-Maitland, Tilford-Nevee, St. Onge-Keith, Lohmiller-Glenberg, Winler-Lismas-Swanboy, Kyle-Pierre-Hisle, Samsil-Lismas-Pierre, Nevee-Vale-Tilford, Butche-Satanta-Boneek, Nunn-Kyle-Pierre, Barnum-Swint-St. Onge, Grummit-Snomo-Rock, Paunsaugunt-Rock, Lakoa-Maitland, and Citadel-Vanocker-Grizzly.

The average annual precipitation in the Belle Fourche River Watershed ranges from 15 to 29 inches, and 70 percent of this is usually received from April through September. Tornadoes and severe thunderstorms strike occasionally. These storms are local, of short duration, and occasionally produce heavy rainfall events. The average seasonal snowfall ranges from 155 inches in the higher elevations of the western part of the watershed to 23 inches per year in the eastern portion of the watershed. The average water allocation to the BFID is approximately 15 inches. The water added to the fields from irrigation nearly doubles the amount of water available for crop production.

The landscape in the watershed is characterized by prairies with some mountains in the south and west. Land elevation ranges from about 2,500 feet above mean sea level (msl) to about 7,071 msl. The Black Hills are steep, and the hills near the Cheyenne River are not as steep.

- 2.3** The Belle Fourche River Watershed within South Dakota encompasses over 2 million acres. TSS are contributed from natural, urban, agriculture, forest, and mining sources. The TMDL study identified that the primary contributor of TSS to the Belle Fourche River and Horse Creek are the natural bank sloughing, quantity of nonused irrigation water discharged to the natural waterways, and riparian habitat impairment. Stream entrenchment and bank failure are responsible for approximately 75 percent of the TSS in the Belle Fourche River system. Stream energy causes natural bank failure (particularly in the eastern portion of the watershed). These areas are dominated by high banks composed primarily of clay soils that supply suspended solids to the channel. Riparian areas and

improper grazing or overgrazing in the uplands facilitate natural bank failure and add to TSS in the watershed. Increased quantities of water resulting from the nonused irrigation flows are the major driving cause of the channel incision and result in additional bank failures and resultant suspended solids.

Irrigation and return-flow, nonused irrigation water are responsible for approximately 20 percent of the TSS in the Belle Fourche River system. Much of the irrigation in the watershed is flood irrigation. This type of irrigation results in sediments that are mobilized by three processes: (1) tail water/runoff crossing fields, (2) water in the canals and laterals, and (3) water in the intermittent streams carrying tail water/runoff to the perennial streams within the watershed. Rangeland erosion contributes the remaining 5 percent of the TSS load.

The *E. coli* TMDL study identified livestock, wildlife, and stormwater originating from the city of Belle Fourche as the contributors to excess loading in the upper reach of the Belle Fourche River. To meet the standard for immersion recreation, *E. coli* loads need to be reduced 85, 94, 13, 1, and 83 percent during high, moist, midrange, dry, and low flow, respectively.

### **3.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

#### **3.1 GOALS**

The project goal is to bring the Belle Fourche River into compliance for its warm-water permanent fish life and immersion recreation beneficial uses by implementing the BMPs included in the 10-year implementation plan and by implementing additional BMP recommendations from *E. coli* TMDL in the upper reach of the Belle Fourche River. The goal of this project segment, as set forth in the Belle Fourche River TSS and *E. coli* TMDL studies, includes:

- Continuing the implementation of BMPs in the watershed to reduce TSS 18 mg/L reduction below the Belle Fourche Reservoir and 22 mg/L above the Belle Fourche River Reservoir.
- Beginning to implement BMPs that reduce *E. coli* in the Belle Fourche River.
- Developing a Stormwater Management Plan for the city of Belle Fourche.
- Continuing public education and outreach to stakeholders within the Belle Fourche River Watershed.
- Continuing to track the progress toward reaching the goals of the TMDL to help ensure that the BMPs are effective and the proper BMPs are implemented.

#### **3.2 OBJECTIVES AND TASKS**

The strategy outlined in the Belle Fourche River Watershed Implementation Plan is to progressively implement BMPs, such as water management and grazing management systems in the riparian areas, within the Belle Fourche River Watershed to reduce TSS in Horse Creek and the Belle Fourche River. This project segment focuses on BMPs that reduce the amount of nonused irrigation water that is discharged to the local waterways from the delivery and application of irrigation water as well as riparian vegetation improvement. Baseline and seasonal monitoring will be performed to measure improvement. The project strategy will be reviewed annually to measure overall success to determine adjustments and to obtain funding for the following project segment. Federal, state, and private

funding will be used to fund BMPs. A final report will be produced for each 319 project segment that is completed.

Specifically, this project segment will fund the eighth and ninth years of BMP installation in the Belle Fourche River Watershed to continue TSS reduction as well as begin implementing BMPs that target at *E. coli* reduction. Additional projects and funding proposals will be submitted during the next 5 years to continue installing BMPs that reduce TSS and *E. coli* to meet the TMDLs.

**OBJECTIVE 1: Implement BMPs Recommended in the Belle Fourche River Watershed TMDL to Reduce TSS and *E. coli***

The Belle Fourche River TSS TMDL recommends BMPs that focuses on reducing the amount of nonused irrigation water discharged to the waterway from irrigation as well as implementing riparian vegetation improvements. Nonused water reduction activities include water delivery as well as water application improvement.

The TMDL states that the amount of nonused water discharged to the local waterways needs to be reduced by 12,000 acre-feet. Implementing BMPs before this project segment has reduced the nonused water discharged to local waterways by 7,936 acre-feet (66 percent of the overall goal).

**Task 1**

**Reduce Nonused Water Discharged to the Local Waterways From the Delivery and Application Systems by 2,658 Acre-Feet**

The BFID maintains and operates irrigation facilities for the BOR. The BFID has an active water conservation program. Historically, the program included lining the canals, piping, and operational and maintenance procedures to conserve water. Irrigation significantly impacts the Belle Fourche River along with Horse Creek and other streams within the BFID's 57,000 (+) acres (irrigable land). The impact is primarily from the additional water added to the system during the irrigation season (June–September), and the average TSS concentrations at USGS Gaging Station Sites 06430500 (at the South Dakota-Wyoming border) and USGS 06438000 (upstream of the Cheyenne River) were historically over 2.5 times the 12-month average. For the same sites, over 95 percent of the load occurred during the irrigation season before the implementation project. Approximately 36 percent of the water lost is attributed to irrigation transportation and operational losses. Transportation losses include seepage and evaporation. Operational losses include overflow from the canals, laterals, and gates/valves into the adjacent waterways.

Approximately 64 percent of the water released from the reservoir was delivered to the field. Approximately 32 percent was used by crops. The rest was lost through evaporation and nonused water discharged to adjacent waterways. This water also carried TSS picked up from the fields from flood-irrigation water. This task will increase the overall irrigation delivery and application efficiency through the use of sprinkler systems, pipelines, and water control and monitoring structures and equipment.

**Products:**

1. Improved Irrigation Water Delivery and Application.







– Milestone: December 2014, Stormwater Management Plan Document  
(see timeline on page 17)

Total Product Cost: \$80,000                      319 Cost: \$80,000  
Responsible Groups: Consultants, City of Belle Fourche

**OBJECTIVE 2: Conduct Public Outreach and Education, Implementation Record Keeping, Cultural Resources, Engineering Projects, Report Writing, Writing Future Grants**

Public outreach and education is an essential part of this project. Public meetings and workshops keep the community informed and encourage involvement with the BFRWP. Producer implementation project planning and record keeping is important for efficient report writing. Grant writing for future projects involving water-quality issues in the watershed will further assist in the BFRWP efforts. Beginning in 2006, an additional \$4,632,500 was funded for the watershed through these grant writing efforts.

Task 4                      **Project Management and Administration**

Products:

4. Public Outreach and Education, Implementation Record Keeping, Cultural Resources, Engineering, Audits, Report Writing, and Future Grant Writing.

Eight public meetings will be held during the project segment. The meetings will update the status of the project and educate and encourage the producers, landowners, and stakeholders to become involved with implementing BMPs. These meetings will provide an opportunity for input from residents in the area. Notification of meetings will be made to local agencies, mailings, and newspapers. In addition, a public website will be maintained to provide the latest available data as well as an overview of the project and status of work activities ([www.bellefourchewatershed.com](http://www.bellefourchewatershed.com)). Public awareness will be further enhanced by annual tours of the watershed, informational booths at local county fairs, and agriculture-related shows demonstrating BFRWP accomplishments. Educational workshops will be sponsored during the project and demonstrate innovative approaches to addressing resource concerns in the watershed. The BFRWP's Soil-Quality Demonstration Trailer will be used extensively to demonstrate the effects of soil erosion to agriculture producers, students, and the general public in the watershed. To date, over 2,000 people have watched the demonstration. Consultants will be responsible for organizing and planning all public outreach and education activities.

Riparian and irrigation implementation projects require collaborating with the producer to complete applications, plan projects, check cultural resources, conduct engineering, check practices once they are complete, and organize and file applications and producer bills. Consultants will work with NRCS and the Butte County Conservation District to carry out this task.

Grant Reporting and Track System (GRTS) Reports will be completed as required by SD DENR. A final report will be submitted to the EPA at the conclusion of the project. This report will cover all the work completed during this segment of

implementation and the estimated effects the BMPs will have on the water quality in the Belle Fourche River. Additional grants to assist in resolving water-quality issues and support the cost of implementation projects will be written.

- Activity Cost: \$340,000 319 Cost: \$340,000
- Lead Group: BFRWP
- Other Group: NRCS, Producers, Consultants, Butte Conservation District
- Milestone: June 2015, two GRTS reports, one final report, eight public meetings, one website, two watershed tours, two workshops, eight public information booths, and 20 soil-quality demonstrations (see timeline on page 17).

Total Product Cost: \$340,000 319 Cost: \$340,000  
Responsible Groups: BFRWP, NRCS, Producers, Consultants, Butte Conservation District

### **OBJECTIVE 3: Complete Essential Water-Quality Monitoring**

Water-quality monitoring will continue to use a targeted approach. Water-quality data will be collected at sites used during the watershed assessment to formulate the TMDL.

#### **Task 4**

#### **Water-Quality Monitoring to Assess BMPs**

##### **Products:**

##### **5. Monitor Water-Quality Improvement.**

Water-quality monitoring will use a targeted approach. Water-quality data will be collected at sites used during the watershed assessment to formulate the TMDL. Flow impact on the macrowatershed will be analyzed using the following USGS stations:

- USGS 06428500 (Belle Fourche River at the South Dakota and Wyoming state line)
- USGS 06436000 (Belle Fourche River near Fruitdale, South Dakota)
- USGS 06437000 (Belle Fourche River near Sturgis, South Dakota)
- USGS 06438000 (Belle Fourche River near Elm Springs, South Dakota)
- USGS 06433000 (Redwater River above Belle Fourche, South Dakota)
- HC01 (Horse Creek above BFID)
- HC02 (Historically called USGS 06436760 Horse Creek above Vale, South Dakota).

Several of the stations are long-term flow measurement sites operated, funded, and maintained by USGS. The practices installed to reduce the amount of nonused water discharging to the waterways within the irrigation district should be detectable at the Belle Fourche River sites near Sturgis and Elm Springs as well as at the Horse Creek site above Vale. The other sites recommended will allow a water mass balance to be calculated, and this will add to the precision of the analysis. *E. coli*, TSS, and conductivity will be measured on a continuous basis at Horse Creek above Vale to provide baseline data that measures water-quality improvements that result





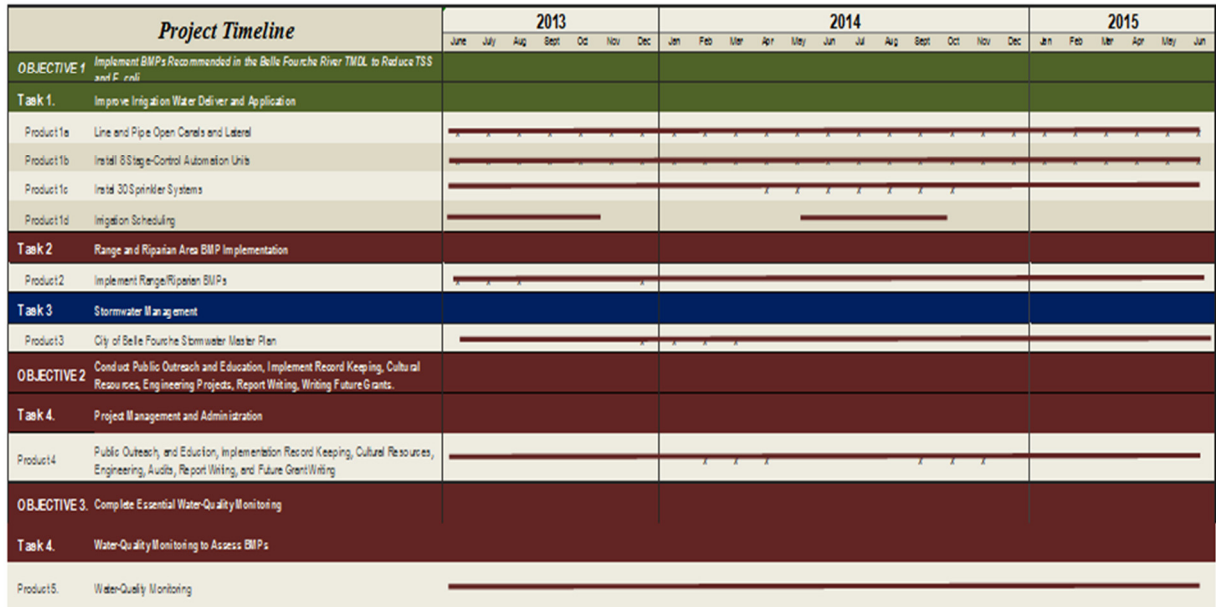


Figure 4-1. Timeline of the Project.

#### 4.3 OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE QUALITY ASSURANCE

Responsibilities for operation and maintenance of 319 funded BMPs will be provided through conservation district/landowner contracts. Contracts developed for BMP installation will specify operation and maintenance needs, procedures for BMP failure or abandonment, and the life-span of the BMPs terms agreed upon in the contract. The NRCS and consultants will be responsible for completing operation and maintenance scheduling, on-site evaluations, and follow-up with landowners when actions are necessary to ensure BMP operation for its designated life-span.

The NRCS; Farm Service Agency; the Butte, Lawrence, and Elk Creek Conservation Districts; District Supervisors; BOR; and consultants will be responsible for ensuring BMPs cost-shared with the EPA 319 funds are properly installed and maintained. Compliance with BMPs implemented with 319 funds will follow the same rules and regulations as the NRCS' EQIP. These rules are found in Section 515.113 of the EQIP Program Manual. Landowners and operators who do not maintain practices funded by this project for the length of the agreed contract will be required to repay all cost-share funds and any liquidated damages incurred. Conservation district personnel supported by the agent acting on behalf of the BFRWP will be responsible for landowner contacts, developing a landowner/producer mailing list, keeping records, submitting vouchers and reports, and recording cash and in-kind match. Where BOR funds are used, the BOR will be responsible to ensure that the BMPs are operated and maintained properly for the life of the contract.

## **5.0 COORDINATION PLAN**

### **5.1 PARTICIPATING GROUPS AND AGENCIES**

The BFRWP has been working together for over 7 years and has completed monitoring and evaluation work and submitted a TMDL study for approval. Some of the BMPs recommended in the TMDL have been implemented (one flow automation unit, partial completion of replacing open ditches with pipeline, partial completion of pipeline projects from BFID to fields, partial completion of installation of sprinkler systems, and partial completion of riparian vegetation improvement projects). The following groups/agencies have been participating, and will continue to participate in the Belle Fourche River Watershed implementation project:

- **Butte Conservation District** – Voting member of the BFRWP, provides financial support and EQIP funding.
- **Belle Fourche Irrigation District (BFID)** – Voting member of the BFRWP, implements many BMPs, provides financial support and match funding.
- **Belle Fourche River Watershed Partnership (BFRWP)** – Local project sponsor.
- **Elk Creek Conservation District** – Voting member of the BFRWP, provides financial support and EQIP funding.
- **Lawrence County** – Local support, provides funding.
- **Lawrence Conservation District** – Voting member of the BFRWP, provides financial support and EQIP funding.
- **South Dakota Association of Conservation Districts** – New active participant of BFRWP, full-time effort under the 319 grant program titled *303 (d) Watershed Planning and Assistance Project*.
- **South Dakota Conservation Commission** – Provides financial support.
- **South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources (SD DENR)** – Active participation in BFRWP, technical support and financial support.
- **South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (SD GFP)** – Participant in BFRWP, provides technical and financial support.
- **South Dakota Grassland Coalition** – Grassland management project, provides financial support.
- **South Dakota School of Mines and Technology (SDSM&T)** – Active participant in BFRWP, provides technical support through Dr. Kenner and graduate students (SDSM&T performed the initial TMDL study).
- **South Dakota State University (SDSU)** – Provides technical support, West River Ag Center personnel.
- **US Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)** – Active participation in BFRWP, provides technical support through drawings and designs as requested by BFID, provides financial support.
- **US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** – Provide 319 and 106 funding and technical guidance.
- **US Geological Survey (USGS)** – Active participant in BFRWP, field work, and provides technical and financial support.
- **US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)** – Participant in BFRWP, provides technical and financial support.

- **US Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)** – Participant in BFRWP, provides technical and financial support.
- **Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality (WY DEQ)** – Provides Local support and financial support for flow measurements at the South Dakota-Wyoming state line.

## **5.2 LETTERS OF SUPPORT**

Letters of support have been supplied by local organizations to the SD DENR that support the Belle Fourche River Watershed Assessment Project.

## **5.3 COORDINATION WITH OTHER PROGRAMS**

The BFRWP will continue to coordinate activities with state, federal, and local government agencies through frequent personal communication and quarterly partnership meetings. SD GFP, USFWS, NRCS, SD DENR, local organizations, and local government agencies will provide input and involvement in this implantation project. Coordination with these agencies will include work-related to other grassland improvement projects and other 303(d) assessment work. Extra coordination with local NRCS personnel will be necessary for the riparian vegetation and irrigation improvement projects.

## **5.4 SIMILAR ACTIVITIES IN WATERSHED**

All practices within the Belle Fourche River Watershed are included in the funding table.

## **6.0 EVALUATION AND MONITORING PLAN**

### **6.1 QUALITY CONTROL AND ASSURANCE**

The collection of field data will be performed in accordance with the SD DENR's *Standard Operating Procedures for Field Samplers, Tributary and In-Lake Sampling Techniques*. A minimum of 10 percent (1 sample) of all samples collected will be quality assurance/quality control (QA/QC) samples. QA/QC samples will consist of field duplicates or field replicate samples.

### **6.2 DATA**

The data will be provided to SD DENR. The data and analysis for this project will be documented in a final report that the BFRWP will provide for the SD DENR.

**Better Assessment Science Integrating Point and Nonpoint Sources (BASINS)** and **Hydrological Simulation Program - FORTRAN (HSPF)** were used to model the Belle Fourche River Watershed when the TMDL was developed. To develop the TMDL and to determine the necessary load reductions, several BMPs were modeled in these programs to reduce TSS concentrations in the streams within the Belle Fourche River Watershed. The sources of TSS identified were range erosion, irrigation and on-farm waste, free cattle access to streams, riparian degradation, natural geologic processes, hydraulic alteration by irrigation, and reduced stream miles. To understand the progress made in achieving the goals of the TMDL plan, the BFRWP monitors present progress against planned progress in midyear and annual reports (load reductions reported annually).

Evaluating the project's success in reaching the objectives and goals will be accomplished by: (1) comparing the scheduled versus the actual milestone completion dates; (2) comparing the flow rates

and chemistry for irrigation water application, delivery, and riparian BMPs; (3) measuring the reduction in nonused water from BFID discharged into streams; and (4) developing a sustainable watershed implementation project measured in part by the participation and approval of additional grant money for BMP implementation. Project monitoring will be reviewed by the BFRWP in quarterly meetings to report progress toward the goals and objectives.

### 6.3 LONG-TERM OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE FUNDING

The long-term Operation and Maintenance (O&M) funding for irrigation delivery improvements will be funded and maintained by the BFID. Proper management of stream riparian habitat and on-farm irrigation improvements will be managed and supported financially in part by the NRCS and EQIP funding.

### 7.0 BUDGET

Table 7-1 identifies the funding sources and cash flow during the project. Table 7-2 defines the acronyms used in Table 7-1. Tables 7-3 and 7-4 present the budget for the 319 funds as well as the matching funds for the project. EPA 319 funds represent less than 30 percent of the total project budget. Table 7-5 shows the total budget and Table 7-6 summarizes the other funds being spent on the project that cannot be used as matching funds.

**Table 7-1. Cash Flow**

<b>Budget</b>	<b>June 2013–May 2015 (\$)</b>	<b>June 2013–July 2015 (\$)</b>	<b>Total (\$)</b>
319 Funds	597,500	597,500	1,195,000
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>597,500</b>	<b>597,500</b>	<b>1,195,000</b>
<b>Nonmatching Funds</b>			
SD DENR (Water Rights)	35,000	35,000	70,000
NRCS EQIP	1,150,000	1,150,000	2,300,000
COE	7,000	7,000	14,000
BOR	78,500	78,500	157,000
USGS	86,700	86,700	173,400
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>1,357,200</b>	<b>1,357,200</b>	<b>2,714,400</b>
<b>Matching Funds</b>			
Producer	425,000	425,000	850,000
Lawrence County	7,000	7,000	14,000
BFID	80,250	80,250	160,500
WY DEQ	7,000	7,000	14,000
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>519,250</b>	<b>519,250</b>	<b>1,038,500</b>
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>2,473,950</b>	<b>2,473,950</b>	<b>4,947,900</b>

**Table 7-2. Table of Acronyms**

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Definition</b>
SD DENR	South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources
NRCS EQIP	Natural Resources Conservation Service Environmental Quality Incentives Program
COE	Corps of Engineers
BOR	Bureau of Reclamation
USGS	United States Geological Survey
BFID	Belle Fourche Irrigation District
WY DEQ	Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality

**Table 7-3. Budget of 319 Funds**

<b>Project Description</b>	<b>Consultants (\$)</b>	<b>Producer (\$)</b>	<b>BFID (\$)</b>	<b>BFRWP (\$)</b>	<b>Butte Conservation District (\$)</b>	<b>Totals (\$)</b>
<b>Objective 1. Implement BMPs Recommended in the Belle Fourche River TMDL to Reduce TSS and <i>E. coli</i></b>						
<b>Task 1. Reduce Nonused Water</b>						
Product 1. Improved Irrigation Water Delivery and Application						
1a. Line and Pipe Open Canals and Laterals						
1b. Install 8 Stage-Control Automation Units			50,000			50,000
1c. Install 30 Sprinkler Systems		500,000				500,000
1d. Irrigation Scheduling	35,000					35,000
<b>Task 2. Range and Riparian Area BMP Implementation</b>						
Product 2. Implement Riparian/Rangeland BMPs		150,000				150,000
<b>Task 3. Stormwater Management</b>						
Product 3. City of Belle Fourche Stormwater Master Plan	80,000					80,000
<b>Objective 2. Conduct Public Outreach and Education, Implementation Record Keeping, Cultural Resources, Engineering Projects, Report Writing, Writing Future Grants</b>						
<b>Task 4. Project Management and Administration</b>						
Product 4. Public Outreach, and Education Implementation Record Keeping, Cultural Resources, Engineering, Audits, Report Writing, and Future Grant Writing	280,000			20,000	40,000	340,000
<b>Objective 3. Complete Essential Water-Quality Monitoring</b>						
<b>Task 5. Water-Quality Monitoring to Assess BMPs</b>						
Product 5. Water-Quality Monitoring	40,000					40,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>435,000</b>	<b>650,000</b>	<b>50,000</b>	<b>20,000</b>	<b>40,000</b>	<b>1,195,000</b>

**Table 7-4. Budget of 319, and Matching Funds Budget (Page 1 of 2)**

EPA 319 and Matching Funds Budget	EPA 319 (\$)	Matching Funds (\$)				Sum of Matching Funds (\$)
		Producer (Cash and In-kind) (\$)	Lawrence County (Cash) (\$)	BFID (Cash and In-kind) (\$)	WY DEQ (Cash)	
<b>Objective 1. Implement BMPs Recommended in the Belle Fourche River TMDL to Reduce TSS and <i>E. coli</i></b>						
<b>Task 1. Reduce Nonused Water</b>						
Product 1. Improved Irrigation Water Delivery and Application						
1a. Line and Pipe Open Canals and Laterals						
1b. Install Eight Stage-Control Automation Units	50,000			150,000		150,000
1c. Install 30 Sprinkler Systems	500,000	800,000				800,000
1d. Irrigation Scheduling	35,000					
<b>Task 2. Range and Riparian Area BMP Implementation</b>						
Product 2. Implement Riparian/Rangeland BMPs	150,000	50,000				50,000
<b>Task 3. Stormwater Management</b>						
Product 3. City of Belle Fourche Stormwater Master Plan	80,000					
<b>Objective 2. Conduct Public Outreach and Education, Implementation Record Keeping, Cultural Resources, Engineering Projects, Report Writing, Writing Future Grants</b>						
<b>Task 4. Project Management and Administration</b>						
Product 4. Public Outreach, and Education Implementation Record Keeping, Cultural Resources, Engineering, Audits, Report Writing, and Future Grant Writing	340,000					



**Table 7-4. Budget of 319, and Matching Funds Budget (Page 2 of 2)**

EPA 319 and Matching Funds Budget	EPA 319 (\$)	Matching Funds (\$)				Sum of Matching Funds (\$)
		Producer (Cash and In-kind) (\$)	Lawrence County (Cash) (\$)	BFID (Cash and In-kind) (\$)	WY DEQ (Cash)	
<b>Objective 3. Complete Essential Water-Quality Monitoring</b>						
<b>Task 5. Water-Quality Monitoring to Assess BMPs</b>						
Product 5. Water-Quality Monitoring Improvement	40,000		14,000	10,500	14,000	38,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,195,000</b>	<b>850,000</b>	<b>14,000</b>	<b>160,500</b>	<b>14,000</b>	<b>1,038,500</b>

**Table 7-5. Total Budget**

<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>EPA 319 (\$)</b>	<b>Matching Funds (\$)</b>	<b>Nonmatching Funds (\$)</b>	<b>Line Item Total (\$)</b>
<b>Objective 1. Implement BMPs Recommended in the Belle Fourche River TMDL to Reduce TSS and <i>E. coli</i></b>				
<b>Task 1. Reduce Nonused Water</b>				
<b>Product 1. Improved Irrigation Water Delivery and Application</b>				
1a. Line and Pipe Open Canals and Laterals			150,000	150,000
1b. Install 8 Stage-Control Automation Units	50,000	150,000		200,000
1c. Install 30 Sprinkler Systems	500,000	800,000	800,000	2,100,000
1d. Irrigation Scheduling	35,000			35,000
<b>Task 2. Range and Riparian Area BMP Implementation</b>				
Product 2. Implement Riparian/Rangeland BMPs	150,000	50,000	1,500,000	1,700,000
<b>Task 3. Stormwater Management</b>				
Product 3. City of Belle Fourche Stormwater Master Plan	80,000			80,000
<b>Objective 2. Conduct Public Outreach and Education, Implementation Record Keeping, Cultural Resources, Engineering Projects, Report Writing, Writing Future Grants</b>				
<b>Task 3. Project Management and Administration</b>				
Product 4. Public Outreach, and Education Implementation Record Keeping, Cultural Resources, Engineering, Audits, Report Writing, and Future Grant Writing	340,000			340,000
<b>Objective 3. Complete Essential Water-Quality Monitoring</b>				
<b>Task 4. Water-Quality Monitoring to Assess BMPs</b>				
Product 5. Water-Quality Monitoring	40,000	38,500	264,400	342,900
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,195,000</b>	<b>1,038,500</b>	<b>2,714,400</b>	<b>4,947,900</b>

**Table 7-6. Nonmatching Funds Budget**

EPA 319 and Nonmatching Funds Budget	Nonmatching Funds					Sum of Nonmatching Funds (\$)
	SD DENR (Federal) (\$)	NRCS EQIP (Federal) (\$)	COE (Federal) (\$)	BOR (Federal) (\$)	USGS (Federal) (\$)	
<b>Objective 1. Implement BMPs Recommended in the Belle Fourche River Watershed TMDL to Reduce TSS and <i>E. coli</i></b>						
<b>Task 1. Reduce Nonused Water</b>						
Product 1. Improved Irrigation Water Delivery and Application						
1a. Line and Pipe Open Canals and Laterals				150,000		150,000
1b. Install Eight Stage-Control Automation Units						
1c. Install 30 Sprinkler Systems		800,000				800,000
1d. Irrigation Scheduling						
<b>Task 2. Range and Riparian Area BMP Implementation</b>						
Product 2. Implement Riparian/Rangeland BMPs		1,500,000				1,500,000
<b>Task 3. Stormwater Management</b>						
Product 3. City of Belle Fourche Stormwater Master Plan						
<b>Objective 2. Conduct Public Outreach and Education, Implementation Record Keeping, Cultural Resources, Engineering Projects, Report Writing, Writing Future Grants</b>						
<b>Task 4. Project Management and Administration</b>						
Product 4. Public Outreach, and Education Implementation Record Keeping, Cultural Resources, Engineering, Audits, Report Writing, and Future Grant Writing						
<b>Objective 3. Complete Essential Water-Quality Monitoring</b>						
<b>Task 5. Water-Quality Monitoring to Assess BMPs</b>						
Product 5. Water-Quality Monitoring	70,000		14,000	7,000	173,400	264,400
<b>Total</b>	<b>70,000</b>	<b>2,300,000</b>	<b>14,000</b>	<b>157,000</b>	<b>173,400</b>	<b>2,714,400</b>

## **8.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

Communicating with the major stakeholders in this project is critical to its success. Public involvement in the project will continue through public meetings with stakeholders, tours sponsored by BFRWP, newsletters sent out by conservation districts, radio advertisements, word of mouth, and the website developed by the partnership ([www.bellefourchewatershed.com](http://www.bellefourchewatershed.com)).

## **9.0 THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES**

The following endangered species are identified by the SD GFP as located within and/or migrating through the Lawrence, Butte, and Meade Counties: bald eagle, whooping crane, least tern, black-tailed prairie dog, and the black-footed ferret. The implementation of this project is not expected to impact any of these species. An Endangered Species Act Compliance Assessment letter dated May 18, 2004, from Mr. Doug Lofstedt (South Dakota Section 319 Project Officer), documents the “no affect” determination for the endangered species in the project area.

The procedure to ensure that threatened and endangered species are not adversely affected by project activities is based on the following three main premises, which are the same as those used for Segments 1–4:

- The managed grazing systems, both planned and implemented, will promote the restoration or preservation of critical grassland habitat.
- It is anticipated that many of the grazing systems that are planned and implemented will be within areas that have compliance plans in place.
- The involvement of the NRCS and the USFWS in planning and construction grazing systems ensures personnel trained for mitigating threatened and endangered species will be involved with the design and implementation of project BMPs.

The species that are most likely to be encountered during the project, and the procedure to follow that relates one are included below.

### **9.1 Bald Eagle**

The bald eagle is a threatened species with a known certainty of occurrence in all three counties. According to the USFWS, bald eagles are known to nest in the flood plain forest along the Missouri River in Yankton, Bon Homme, Union, and Gregory Counties; along the James River in Brown, Spink, Sanborn, and Hutchinson Counties; and in forested areas in Meade, Charles Mix, and Brown Counties of South Dakota.

The 319-funded activities will be very low intensity and widely dispersed over the landscape. The activities will not significantly increase or expand the level of human activity. Activities that disturb possible nesting sites or reduce food sources are not anticipated. Therefore, EPA-funded activities are expected to have no effect on the bald eagle and no consultation with the USFWS is planned.

### **9.2 Whooping Crane**

The whooping crane is an endangered species with a known certainty of occurrence in all three counties. They are often found in South Dakota during spring and fall migrations. Migration through the state occurs from mid- to late-April and mid- to late-October. Although a variety of habitats are used during migration, a wetland is always used for night roosting and frequently for foraging. While

migrating, whooping cranes roost in wide, shallow, open water areas, including marshes, flooded crop fields, artificial ponds, reservoirs, and rivers. Roosting sites must also be isolated from human disturbances.

The EPA-funded monitoring activities will be of low intensity, widely dispersed over the landscape, and will not significantly increase or expand the level of human activity. In addition, if any cranes are observed at any project work site, “all mechanical activities at the site will be suspended until the bird(s) leave the site under their own volition” (Section 8.1). Thus the EPA-funded activities are expected to have no effect on the whooping crane and no consultation with the USFWS is planned.

### **9.3 Least Tern**

The least tern is listed as an endangered species with a “known” certainty of occurrence in Meade County. This species historically breeds in isolated areas along the Missouri, Mississippi, Ohio, Red, and Rio Grande river systems. The least tern is a local summer resident of the Missouri and Cheyenne Rivers in South Dakota. They can be found migrating through virtually all of South Dakota with the exception of the Black Hills. Least terns usually nest on open expanses of sand or small pebble beaches along shorelines, riverbanks, sandbars, and islands. Least terns typically select nesting sites that are well-drained and away from the water line (usually near a small ridge or piece of driftwood). Their food source consists almost entirely of small fish, and feeding requires shallow water areas with an abundance of fish near the nesting area.

Major losses and alterations of habitat occur from shoreline, bank, and channel modification from the construction of locks, dams, dikes, levees, and reservoirs. Flooding can prevent or destroy nesting and can be a byproduct of habitat alteration. Habitat losses can also result from increased development, recreational uses, natural erosion, human and domestic pet disturbances or harassment, and trampling by cattle. Pollution that affects fish populations can also impact least terns.

The 319-funded monitoring activities will be of low intensity, widely dispersed over the landscape, confined to a few isolated stream channel areas, and will not significantly increase or expand the level of human activity. Activities that disturb possible nesting sites or reduce food sources are not anticipated. If any least terns are observed near any project work site, “all mechanical activities at the site will be suspended until the bird(s) leave the site under their own volition” (PIP Section 8.2). Therefore, EPA-funded activities are expected to have no effect on the least tern and no consultation with the USFWS is planned.

### **9.4 Black-Tailed Prairie Dog**

The black-tailed prairie dog is listed as a “Candidate” species with a “known” certainty of occurrence in all three counties. Black-tailed prairie dog colonies are almost exclusively located in grassland habitats because their primary diet consists of vegetation.

The 319-funded activities will be widely dispersed over the landscape and not related to black-tailed prairie dog habitats. The activities will not significantly increase or expand the level of human activity. Activities that disturb or reduce food sources are not anticipated. Therefore, EPA-funded activities are expected to have no effect on the black-tailed prairie dog and no consultation with the USFWS is planned.

## **9.5 Black-Footed Ferret**

The black-footed ferret is an endangered species with a “possible” certainty of occurrence in all three counties. This species is a member of the weasel family. It feeds primarily on prairie dogs and uses their burrows for denning and shelter. Their historic range included Arizona, Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Wyoming, Alberta, and Saskatchewan. The South Dakota population that disappeared in the wild in 1974 was thought to be the last remaining population. However, a captive propagation program was started from a Meeteetse, Wyoming, population that was discovered in 1981. Reintroductions have since occurred in Arizona, Colorado, Montana, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming. The South Dakota sites include the Conata Basin, Badlands National Park, and Cheyenne River Sioux tribal land in Dewey and Ziebach Counties.

Primary threats to the black-footed ferret include predation, disease, and loss of habitat. The ferrets can be affected by predators such as coyotes, golden eagles, great-horned owls, prairie falcons, badgers, bobcats, and foxes. Canine distemper will kill ferrets and sylvatic plague can eliminate entire prairie dog towns. In South Dakota, sylvatic plague currently poses the biggest threat to ferret populations. However, poisoning prairie dogs and converting native prairie to cropland are main threats to ferret habitats.

The existence of black-footed ferrets is directly linked to the presence of prairie dogs. The sponsor will address the black-footed ferrets by complying with the South Dakota Prairie Dog Management Plan. If any actions are planned that may adversely affect the survival of a native or introduced population of black-footed ferrets, the sponsor will consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.