

PhD Assistantship Available
Plant Community and Ecosystem Function Impacts of Bison Grazing
Department of Natural Resource Management, South Dakota State University

The Department of Natural Resource Management at South Dakota State University is seeking a PhD research assistant to join a multidisciplinary team on a USDA-NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) project with research focused on rangeland management using winter swath bale grazing at a bison ranch in the Nebraska Sandhills. The student will focus on the implications of this management on grassland plant community structure and soil ecosystem function. The selected student is expected to contribute to the broader project by addressing questions related to changes in plant community composition, soil organic matter, and soil carbon fluxes, but also develop related research of their own. The project is collaborative between faculty at West River Research and Extension and with the Center for Excellence in Bison Studies in Rapid City, SD, and faculty on the main campus in Brookings, SD. The student will be based in Brookings during the academic year with the option of spending one to two semesters in Rapid City but will live and work at the field site during the summer. Applicants must have an MSc in a related field, an interest in rangeland ecology and management, a background in plant community ecology or ecosystem ecology, strong field and quantitative skills and ability to add to them, an interest in working collaboratively within a large and diverse research group, excellent communication skills, and a willingness to publish impactful research. Preferred qualifications include having peer-reviewed publication(s). The position will begin in May 2025.

The Department of Natural Resource Management at South Dakota State University combines Range, Wildlife, Fisheries, and Ecology within the College of Food, Agriculture and Environmental Sciences and has approximately 50 graduate students and a growing number of PhD students. Main campus is located in Brookings, SD approximately one hour north of Sioux Falls and four hours east of the Twin Cities and offers a low cost-of-living in a small college-town atmosphere.

To apply, send as a single PDF file your CV; unofficial transcripts; a one-to-two-page letter describing your experience as it relates to this position, research interests, and career goals; a writing sample; and contact information for three professional references to Josh Leffler (Joshua.leffler@sdstate.edu). Do not apply to the university prior to receiving an offer of an assistantship.