

SD Wild Grassland Coalition Hike: Red Shirt Area

**National Public Lands Day
Saturday, 24 September 2011**

National Public Lands Day began 17 years ago, in order to enhance Americans' awareness of our irreplaceable public lands and a sense of shared stewardship, caring for these lands we are blessed to share as a nation.

WHAT: In the spirit of appreciation and discovery, the coalition will coordinate a hike into the western Red Shirt area of the Buffalo Gap National Grassland. This is a short hike, 5 miles round trip at most, so we will be back out by early to mid-afternoon. There'll be time for trail discoveries, a leisurely lunch and enjoying the overlooks.

WHEN/WHERE: Saturday, 24 September. We will meet at the French Creek Campground just off Custer County Road 18 at **9:15 a.m.** Directions will be sent to all who preregister. (At **8:30 a.m.** we will briefly stop at the Hermosa Flying J parking lot for anyone who wants to follow us to the campground.)

WHO: Group size is limited to 10 besides hike coordinators, first-come first-serve. Participants must preregister, and will be required to sign a liability waiver at the campground.

- **NOTE:** A participant may be prohibited from the group hike if a hike coordinator believes the person does not have the physical ability and/or does not have equipment adequate to enable them to safely complete the hike.

High-clearance 4WD vehicles are advised from the campground to the Agate Beds where the hike begins. No problem if your vehicle rides low – We will carpool from the Campground, leaving there at **9:40.**

Come prepared

Heat is a common factor out here, so carry a couple quarts of water. Besides your lunch, trail snacks like an orange or an apple and something salty are wise to have in your pack. A camera, binoculars and compass add to the fun.

Leave No Trace principles will be observed, meaning "Pack it in, pack it out" for any trash & litter. If nature calls, dig a cathole 6-8" deep for disposal.

Rattlesnakes

Some of us have walked this country for several years and have never seen a rattlesnake, but they are definitely here. Heavy, high-sided leather boots offer some protection. Remember to look before you step. Rattlers don't want to encounter us, and we share that feeling. They're not a worry; we simply use good, alert judgment on the trail. Wilderness sharpens the senses!

Terrain

The first half-mile includes about a 100-yard climb up a steep ridge face. Once on the ridge line, the pathway levels off to easy walking—delightful as pathways go, with a superb view of the surrounding country, valley floors, and distant horizons including the Black Hills. Most of our walk will follow a fairly level, sometimes zigzag ridge line that occasionally broadens out into tablelands. A few places will pitch steeply uphill, but only for short distances.

This is northern Great Plains country, a place where the immensity of the Plains rises toward the Black Hills and in the process breaks out in an array of ruggedly beautiful land forms. You won't find wilder or more scenic grasslands in Western South Dakota!

REGISTRATION: Because of the group size limitation and the possibility of having to cancel due to extreme wet weather in the area, pre-registration is necessary. To register, or for further information, contact David Miller at dvdm@rushmore.com.