

**Regional Watershed Advisory Task Force**

I am Norval Matzner and I farm in Aurora County, SD. My grandfather homesteaded our farm in 1883. Our land lies lower than the surrounding land so water drains onto our land to form a lake that usually retains some water year round. In the first 112 years my family farmed this land (from 1883 to 1995) the water from this lake never once ran over its natural boundaries. In recent years, however, the lake has breached its bed in 1995, 1999, and came within 6 inches of draining out again in 2010 and 2011. In other words, during the first 112 years of our farm's existence, not one drop of water from our farm reached the Gulf of Mexico, but in recent years we've seen more and more water inundate our land and the land of our neighbors. The assessor reported that out of the 800 acres we farm-- 278 acres were consistently flooded. This was measured from FSA Arial photos.

**Why the increased flooding in recent years?**

1. People are draining their wet lands without permission. I can show you 5 ditches within 2 ½ miles of where I live, 3 were not there at all 4 years ago. The 4<sup>th</sup> was there but only ½ as deep and the 5<sup>th</sup> one may be a legal ditch but I don't think so.
2. People are breaking up native prairie. Native Prairie absorbs a lot more water than cropland.

**What can you do?**

1. **Give us the tax relief when we are flooded. The people who drain their water on us should pay our tax. Maybe we could be allowed to create a drainage district which would allow shifting the tax burden on those who drain their water on us.**
2. **After the water runs over from our lake, it ends up on State Game Fish & Parks land and Dept. of Interior land. Work with State Game, Fish & Parks and Federal Dept. of Interior to establish a reasonable level on the lakes that they control.** These agencies typically will not allow any draining unless it runs out naturally. But the water running into these lakes is not natural because of wetland-draining and destruction of naturally absorbent native prairie. Now people are talking about tiling which will only make the situation worse. Allowances should be made for current high water levels.