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Hilger's Gulch Getting A New Look

PIERRE, S.D. – Gov. Dennis Daugaard is embarking on an initiative to bring back the native landscape of South Dakota to Hilger's Gulch and save taxpayer money.

"This is a planned transformation and it's going to save us time and money," Gov. Daugaard said. "On average the state has spent around \$36,000 annually for irrigation and \$23,000 annually for mowing, fertilizing and weed treatment. In dry years, the water bills have approached \$50,000. We're taking this project on as an effort to be better stewards of that money."

For the project, the Governor selected vegetation that can thrive in the natural climate of central South Dakota. The new plant life is expected to save money over time because it will require less maintenance and will not necessitate the use of chemical herbicides.

The renovation will also serve to restore habitat in the area. Working with the South Dakota Bureau of Administration, Gov. Daugaard has strategically mapped out the placement of the various plants, trees and a meadow with purple, yellow and red wildflowers.

As part of the project, the Bureau of Administration will be developing hiking trails throughout the area. The Bureau will also continue to mow and water the outer perimeter of the gulch, including "Sled Hill" and Governor's Grove.

"By returning to native plants, we will not only be save taxpayer dollars but also beautify the entire area. With the new gravel hiking trails, walkers will be able to see the plum trees, prairie roses, blue asters and cone flowers up close," Gov. Daugaard said.

The details of the project were shared on Thursday, July 23, with the Capitol Complex Restoration and Beautification Commission.

The Bureau of Administration began the Hilger's Gulch renovations this month by planting willow trees. More work will be undertaken this fall. The project is expected to be completed by the spring of 2017.

To see a map of the project, go to news.sd.gov/mediacontent.aspx?id=8&media=photo.