



DEPARTMENT OF GAME, FISH, AND PARKS

Foss Building

523 East Capitol

Pierre, South Dakota 57501-3182

Wildlife Division Land Acquisition Priorities and Guidelines January 2016

Today

South Dakota Game Production Areas and Water Access Areas provide residents and visitors with myriad hunting and fishing opportunities, as well as places to enjoy wildlife and the beauty of the South Dakota landscape. In addition to recreation, Wildlife Division lands provide high quality habitat for hundreds of species of resident and migratory wildlife, including rare and declining species.

Private property dominates the South Dakota landscape, accounting for more than 80 percent of the state's acreage, and is important in conserving our natural resources. Every year, hundreds of thousands of hunters, anglers, trappers, and other outdoor enthusiasts enjoy the bounty of our vast natural resources - a strong testament to the high quality of land stewardship provided by South Dakota landowners.

Wildlife Division lands are an equally important part of the South Dakota landscape, as they exist exclusively for the use and enjoyment of hunters, anglers, and all citizens. Found scattered across the vast South Dakota landscape, Game Production Areas and Water Access Areas often provide a county or region with its most important and readily available hunting or fishing opportunities.

Tomorrow

This document serves to guide the Wildlife Division in its land acquisition activities over the next decade. In doing so, it sets forth and describes the Wildlife Division's land acquisition priorities and guiding principles. These priorities and guiding principles are based upon the expertise of Wildlife Division staff, and the input of Wildlife Division land users and other conservation interests who have shared their thoughts about Wildlife Division land acquisition direction over the years.

When the Wildlife Division began purchasing public hunting lands in the late 1930s, efforts were centered on obtaining Game Production Areas and Water Access Areas to provide management and recreational opportunities for individual species rather than specific habitat types. Over time the Wildlife Division shifted its land acquisition efforts to securing native habitat types that support resident and migratory wildlife species, and parcels that improve management efficiency and effectiveness, while still providing a variety of wildlife related recreational opportunities. This approach has resulted in a widely distributed Wildlife Division land inventory of high quality habitat types that is both biologically sound and publicly acceptable.

Land Acquisition Priorities

The Wildlife Division has established the following land acquisition priorities:

Additions to existing Game Production Areas and Water Access Areas

This includes:

- Parcels that improve public use on and access to existing Wildlife Division lands.
- In-holding and round-out parcels that consolidate or connect existing Wildlife Division lands or other public lands open to hunting and fishing related recreation.
- Parcels that facilitate more efficient and effective wildlife habitat management and development activities on existing Wildlife Division lands.
- Parcels that provide buffers or are necessary for maintaining or enhancing the integrity of existing Wildlife Division lands.

Lake and river access

This includes:

- Parcels providing access to public waters for fishing, boating, and hunting.
- Parcels necessary to address public access needs to newly developed fisheries.

Important habitat types, landscapes, and recreational opportunities:

This includes:

- Parcels necessary to expand existing or develop new administrative facilities.
- Parcels containing significant habitat and hunting opportunities for pheasants.
- Parcels containing significant wetland habitat complexes.
- Parcels that represent intact native prairie grassland systems.
- Parcels of undeveloped lakeshores and riparian corridors.
- Parcels associated with planned and coordinated flood mitigation buyout projects.
- Parcels that provide hunting, fishing, and related wildlife recreation opportunities near population centers.
- Parcels with containing rare, unique, or significant plant or animal species or their habitats.

Land Acquisition Guidelines

The Wildlife Division utilizes the following guidelines when conducting land acquisitions:

Regarding process, the Wildlife Division will:

- Utilize existing and long-standing land acquisition procedures, based in Wildlife Division Policy, South Dakota Administrative Rule, and South Dakota Codified Law, in acquiring property as Game Production Areas and Water Access Areas.
- Work only with willing sellers.
- Utilize a property's market value, as determined by an independent appraisal, in negotiating a purchase price.
- Ensure that property appraisals conducted on behalf of the Wildlife Division are completed by State-Certified General Appraisers and conform to Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice (USPAP) or Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisitions (UASFLA) as applicable.

Regarding economics, the Wildlife Division will:

- Carefully consider the economic impacts of proposed land acquisition projects, and champion only those projects with minimal financial burdens and maximum conservation and public use benefits.
- When available as an option, evaluate the costs/benefits of leasing a property for wildlife habitat management and public access opportunities over purchasing it.
- Identify anticipated land management operation, maintenance, and development needs and their associated costs, and develop strategies for meeting these needs prior to acquiring new properties.
- Utilize financial support offered from conservation partners for acquisition and management activities, making the most efficient use of these resources as potential matching funds through grant programs such as the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration program.

Regarding land ownership and stewardship, the Wildlife Division will:

- Strive to be a good neighbor in communities in which it owns land, and involve communities when discussing land management issues.
- Work to identify existing Wildlife Division lands that could be considered surplus to its mission and potentially available for disposal via exchange or sale.
- Utilize carefully evaluated land exchanges above the sale of surplus lands to improve management efficiency and effectiveness in addition to ensuring overall wildlife conservation values and public use opportunities are maintained.
- Ensure compliance with all applicable state and federal laws, rules, regulations, and policies regarding disposal of Wildlife Division lands.
- Only consider accepting land donations that serve its mission, meet or exceed standards for state ownership, and do not impose significant management, liability, or financial concerns on the Wildlife Division.