



# 2019 YEAR IN REVIEW

## SOUTH DAKOTA GAME, FISH AND PARKS

### MISSION

We provide sustainable outdoor recreational opportunities through responsible management of our state's parks, fisheries and wildlife by fostering partnerships, cultivating stewardship and safely connecting people with the outdoors.

### VISION

We will conserve our state's outdoor heritage to enhance the quality of life for current and future generations.

### EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS

**498 PERMANENT STAFF MEMBERS. 507 SEASONAL WORKERS. 158 SUMMER INTERNS. 450+ VOLUNTEERS.**

Each year our staff work tirelessly to collaborate across department lines, with local, state and national partners along with private landowners. Through this they accomplish new priorities and tackle other challenges without hesitation or complaint.

### WHERE THE MONEY GOES | WILDLIFE

HABITAT & ACCESS | \$18,026,861

LAW ENFORCEMENT & ADMINISTRATION | \$13,164,601

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT | \$10,178,082

FISH MANAGEMENT | \$7,891,283

SUPPORT SERVICES | \$4,100,000

CAPITOL DEVELOPMENT | \$2,028,000

### WHERE THE MONEY GOES | PARKS

MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS | \$27,029,355

PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE | \$5,065,875

WATERBASED DEVELOPMENT | \$3,372,000

NEW DEVELOPMENT | \$2,150,000

SNOWMOBILE TRAILS | \$1,376,225

### R3 - RECRUITMENT, RETENTION AND REACTIVATION

All state fish and game agencies, including South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks, rely on hunting and fishing license dollars as well as excise taxes on hunting, fishing and shooting equipment to fund conservation. Baby Boomers are the largest population of outdoor recreationists in the field today, and as they age out of these activities, agencies are left with a conservation funding void to fill. In order to address these issues and ensure the future of conservation, GFP, in conjunction with the GFP Commission and Governor Noem, recognize the necessity to recruit, retain and reactivate participants in hunting, angling, shooting sports, trapping, and outdoor recreation. Efforts to address barriers to participation in outdoor recreation such as a need for education, skills, resources, opportunity, access and clear regulations are taking form.

### STRATEGIC PLAN

In 2016, Game, Fish and Parks embarked on an ambitious strategic plan to drive us into the future. The plan provided a road map of the steps that would be taken to continue to fulfill our agency's mission.

The plan includes long-range goals and proactive objectives with shorter-term strategies for effective, measurable implementation. It was created to be a living, breathing document to guide us in what we do, why we do it and how to do it. It is an organic, "from the ground up" plan and it has grown and changed along with our organization over the last three years.

Staff in every department within GFP worked to execute 70 goals in four areas of focus:

- Opportunities – provide outdoor recreational opportunities
- Resources – serve as stewards of our state's outdoor resources
- Confidence – inspire confidence
- Excellence – foster professional excellence

Of the 70 goals developed under these categories, 44 have been completed and are now part of our daily best practices. With 2019 behind us, we are nearing the end of the plan and all but one of our

goals has seen some sort of progress. Six have been identified as "slow moving", and the remaining 19 are on track and moving toward completion.

The results of some of these goals are broad and foundational things like developing processes to increase efficiency and transparency, implementing key pieces of the Second Century Initiative and enhancing relationships with landowners, customers and other conservation organizations. Other results include small actions that make a big difference, like moving toward paperless applications, improving our use of technology and other equipment, and providing additional avenues for public involvement.

The work we have done since 2016 has laid the foundation for our next strategic plan. As we evaluate our mission, vision and values from this new vantage point, we can see how our current plan has changed us, and how the next plan will again bring us to new heights.

## PARKS VISITATION REMAINS STRONG

### DURING HISTORIC YEAR OF WEATHER

In 2019, the park system had approximately **6.8 million visitors**. The system's **4,400+ campsites**, **225 cabins** and **7 group lodges** saw over **304,000 user nights**.

In 2019, over **128,000 annual park entrance licenses** were purchased along with more than **333,000 temporary park licenses**.

In 2019, **camping permits and park entrance licenses generated \$16.6 million**, all of which was deposited into the parks and recreation fund for ongoing operation and maintenance of state park areas.

In 2019, **93% of reviews rated their camping experience as an "A," with 38 out of 45 areas receiving the top rating**. The feedback allows future customers to see what people are saying about the parks, as well as help park managers identify areas that may need improving.

## TOP 10 MOST VISITED PARKS IN 2019

1. **Custer State Park**
2. **Lewis & Clark Recreation Area**
3. **Oahe Downstream Recreation Area**
4. **Spring Creek Recreation Area**
5. **Cow Creek Recreation Area**
6. **Angostura Recreation Area**
7. **Roy Lake State Park**
8. **Farm Island Recreation Area**
9. **Newton Hills State Park**
10. **Hartford Beach State Park**

## SECOND CENTURY HABITAT & ACCESS PROGRAMS

Governor Kristi Noem implemented the Second Century Initiative from day one of her administration, recognizing the importance to our state of sustaining the long-cherished outdoor heritage. While the initiative includes many components, one of the top priorities is habitat for wildlife. As an agency, the Department of Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) has also identified habitat and access as a priority. This assertion to focus on habitat and access is illustrated in the department's strategic plan adopted in 2016.

Providing producers an alternative program that fits within their operation while providing a short-term conservation program has been a conversation point for quite some time. Some responses from landowners interested in enrolling acres within the federal farm bill and other conservation programs have been the desire to enroll under a shorter time frame; something less than 10 years. Such a program has been designed and implemented by the Second Century Habitat Fund; a 501(c) 3 conservation organization dedicated to wildlife habitat.

## PROVIDING PLACES TO HUNT IS PRIORITY FOR GFP

Over the past five years GFP has cooperated with approximately 1,400 landowners annually to provide access to over 1,200,000 acres of private land through the Walk-In Area (WIA) program. These areas provide upland, big game, and waterfowl hunting opportunities while collaborating with landowners without having to obtain in-person permission to hunt. The department also offer

## 100 YEARS OF STATE PARKS IN 2019

2019 marked 100 years of state parks in South Dakota! This legacy began in 1919 when Custer was named the first official state park. Throughout 2019, we celebrated with throw-back photos in publications and on social media. Visitors were invited to submit their own pictures using the hashtag #MySDTradition. Several parks hosted birthday celebrations, history-themed programming and contests. Park lovers could sport the centennial year's buffalo plaid look with limited-edition t-shirts, hats, tote bags and gift sets.

## SOUTH DAKOTA PARKS BY THE NUMBERS

The South Dakota State Park system includes 13 state parks, 43 recreation areas, 5 nature areas, 1 historic prairie, 70 lakeside use areas and 10 marinas/resorts. In addition, the Division of Parks and Recreation manages the 114-mile Mickelson Trail, South Dakota's Snowmobile Trail Program, and maintains 240 public water access areas.

## RESOURCES FOR RECREATION

|       |                  |       |                            |
|-------|------------------|-------|----------------------------|
| 16    | Welcome Centers  | 122   | Comfort Stations           |
| 9     | Regional Offices | 50    | Beaches                    |
| 3     | Fish Hatcheries  | 328   | Miles of Roads             |
| 2     | Outdoor Campuses | 40    | Fish Cleaning Stations     |
| 75    | Dams             | 291   | Boat Ramps                 |
| 4,412 | Campsites        | 92    | Fishing Docks/Pods         |
| 223   | Camping Cabins   | 1,545 | Miles of Snowmobile Trails |
| 2     | Modern Cabins    |       |                            |
| 7     | Lodges           |       |                            |
| 153   | Picnic Shelters  |       |                            |
| 94    | Playgrounds      |       |                            |

In mid-summer 2019, the Second Century Working Lands program was launched. It is a 5-year enrollment of marginal acres which offers the producer a one-time, up-front \$150/acre payment plus provides the seed, free of charge to plant these conservation acres. Producers are allowed to hay and/or graze these enrolled acres August 1 through March 1. If half the acres are hayed, haying is allowed each year. If all acres enrolled are hayed, haying may occur every other year. The minimum acreage eligible to be enrolled is 10 acres and no more than 160 total acres can be enrolled per participant. Fee hunting operations are not eligible to participate in the program.

To date, over 1,634 acres have been enrolled in the working lands program. Most acres enrolled are found in east-central South Dakota along with a few participants in the western part of the state. The program is available statewide.

the Controlled Hunting Access Program (CHAP) which is a more specialized approach and gives the landowner the discretion to determine what days, species, and how many hunters can sign up to hunt the private property.