



SOUTH DAKOTA GAME, FISH AND PARKS

2020 YEAR IN REVIEW

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

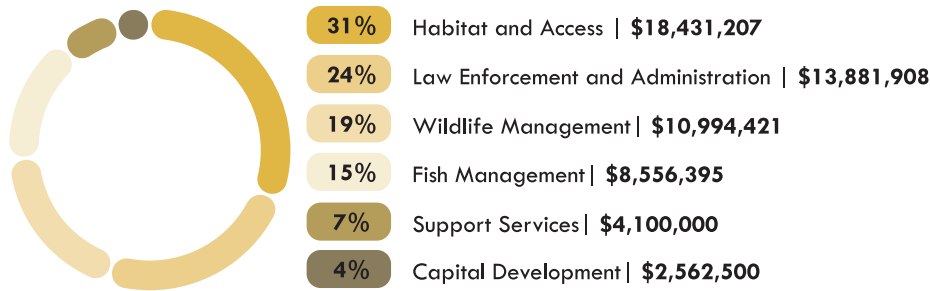
We will conserve our state's outdoor heritage to enhance the quality of life for current and future generations.

EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS

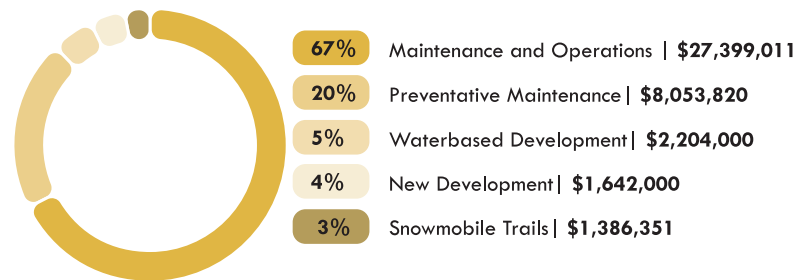
438 PERMANENT STAFF MEMBERS. 192 SEASONAL WORKERS. 33 SUMMER INTERNS. 340+ VOLUNTEERS.

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



WHERE THE MONEY GOES | PARKS



PHEASANT HUNTING

MARKETING GROUP

Earlier this year, the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks teamed up with the South Dakota Department of Tourism to develop a workgroup that produced a robust pheasant hunting marketing plan aimed at increasing resident and nonresident participation in the state's world-class pheasant hunting opportunities. The workgroup was established in early February and consisted of four GFP Commissioners, two Governor's Office staff, three Tourism staff, six GFP staff, and one representative each from the SD Retailers Association, the SD Wildlife Federation and Second Century Habitat Fund Board. The group served in an advisory capacity by offering insight, ideas, and alternatives to increase resident and nonresident participation in South Dakota pheasant hunting while providing an evaluation of the final marketing plan developed by the two state departments.

BIG CHANGES TO THE PHEASANT HUNTING SEASON

The Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission made several changes to pheasant hunting rules, which went into effect beginning with the 2020-2021 season.

First, shooting hours were changed to 10 a.m. central time to sunset, statewide, for the resident only season and opening of the traditional pheasant season. Previously, shooting hours were noon to sunset for the first week of the regular pheasant hunting season and for the resident only season, and then changed to 10 a.m. central time to sunset for the remainder of the season. This change provides more hours of hunting opportunity and results in a consistent shooting time for all pheasant seasons.

The length of the regular pheasant hunting season was extended to the end of January. The last day of the season was previously the first Sunday in January, which was a different date each year. The rule change further simplifies regulations. In addition, GFP

data shows a decline in the harvest rate of roosters over the past couple of decades. The pheasant population can support a higher harvest and a season length extension. This is one way to provide more opportunity and encourage additional harvest.

The last change involves the youth pheasant hunting season. Savannah Hendricks, a junior high student from Vivian, South Dakota, petitioned the GFP Commission to extend the youth pheasant season, allowing more opportunity for youth to participate while handling increasingly busy schedules with school and sports activities. In May 2020, commissioners modified the season dates from five consecutive days beginning on the first Saturday of October to nine consecutive days, which began September 26 and ended October 4, 2020. The primary benefit of the change is providing two full weekends for youth to participate in this season.

PARKS VISITATION SKYROCKETS

In 2020, the park system had **8,162,824 visitations**, which is up 31%, or about 1.9 million visitations from 2019. Visitations are up 21% from our 9 year average, and 16% from next highest year (2013). The system's 4,400+ campsites, 225 cabins, and 7 group lodges saw over 358,000 user nights.

In 2020, **over 137,000 annual park entrance licenses** were purchased along with more than **340,000 temporary park entrance licenses**.

Custer State Park **surpassed 2 million visitations** for the first time in 2020.

In 2020, **camping permits and park entrance licenses generated \$22.2 million**, all of which was deposited into the parks and recreation fund for ongoing operations and maintenance of state park areas.

TOP 10 MOST VISITED PARKS IN 2020

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

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 and South Dakota's Snowmobile Trail Program.

HABITAT STAMP

With the passage of Senate Bill 75 in Legislative Session 2020, GFP began planning for implementation of the Habitat Stamp. Senate Bill 75 earmarked Habitat Stamp funds to only be used on public lands and waters. GFP developed an implementation plan that includes budgeting, project submission and a detailed communications plan with best practices. This detailed approach will help ensure that GFP stays in compliance with the guidelines set out in Senate Bill 75 and are prepared to report out to the legislative Government Operations and Audit Committee (GOAC) annually on the Habitat Stamp and how funds were used.

In 2018, GFP conducted a Game Production Area (GPA) Habitat and Access Assessment wherein \$19 million in habitat and access improvement needs on GPAs were identified. With resources made available through the newly enacted Habitat Stamp, GFP is focusing on high-impact priority habitat and access developments identified in the 2018 assessment for 2020-2021. These habitat and access developments are in addition to the existing annual operation, maintenance, and development activities. Planned Habitat Stamp projects going into 2021 include native grass and nesting cover plantings on 25 GPAs, high diversity pollinator

NEW LODGING OPTIONS ADDED

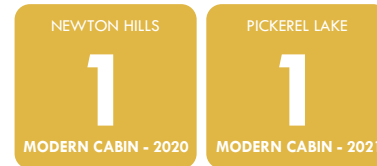
New lodging accommodations in South Dakota State Parks are providing overnight opportunities for folks who aren't equipped for camping. Over the last few years, parks in several locations have added several different lodging options, offering the comforts of home in an outdoor setting any time of the year.

New lodging facilities were added through both new construction and the acquisition of former concessionaire facilities. This fall, a modern cabin was installed at Newton Hills and 36 lodging units were added from the former concessionaire properties at Roy Lake and Spring Creek. These added to the 11 facilities already in the system.

ACQUIRED FACILITIES



NEW CONSTRUCTION



habitat plantings on 10 GPAs, woody cover plantings on 12 GPAs, and improved public access trails - including waterfowl access points - on 16 GPAs. For 2021 and beyond, GFP will maintain and keep current the priority list of GPA habitat and access projects both identified in the 2018 Assessment and new opportunities as they arise.

Resources made available through the Habitat Stamp are also providing an opportunity to accomplish full enrollment of the James River Watershed CREP, where 18,000 acres of the 100,000 authorized acres remain available.

GFP also has identified multiple areas of access and habitat improvement on popular fisheries as well as dams located within the state. GFP utilized this list to determine where Habitat Stamp funds can be spent to help alleviate structural issues within many of the spillways in the state.

The Habitat Stamp is projected to generate nearly \$5 million in annual revenue for habitat and access enhancements on public lands and waters.