

South Dakota Wildlife Action Plan

CHAPTER 7 AGENCY COORDINATION, COOPERATOR INTERACTIONS, AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

7.1 Public Involvement and Partnership Process

SDGFP used the agency's website as an important communication tool during the Plan revision. In addition to the website's traditional uses, such as sharing agency news and events, SDGFP Commission activities, and hunting and fishing season details, SDGFP is now actively involved in social media. This transition will help maintain the website's future relevance to the public and agency partners. This tool was supplemented with targeted messages and meetings with internal staff, other agencies and tribes, species and taxonomic experts, and the general public. The roles and expected input for each group are described below:

SDGFP Staff and their roles:

- Science Team: Members are listed in the Acknowledgements Section. This Team provided overall direction and continuity in the development of the planning process, contract oversight, and plan completion. Members also completed a variety of input-gathering and public involvement tasks and drafted certain plan sections and appendices.
- Internal Resource Staff: SDGFP GIS staff members were critical participants in the Plan revision, assisting with the conservation opportunity area process, in developing formats for making State Wildlife Grant-funded project information more readily accessible to the public, and in overall planning direction. The SDGFP Wildlife Division is composed of 4 administrative regions. Each region has managers responsible for wildlife, fisheries, and land management within regional boundaries. These regional staff and other species experts within the agency were asked for input and assistance at various stages of the planning process.
- Other Internal Staff: General information about the planning effort was shared at various times with Wildlife Division staff to help provide an overall understanding of the process and purpose for the planning effort.
- Outreach Team: Assisted with the public involvement process and conducted public attitude surveys, which are described later in this chapter.
- SDGFP Commission: Information about the planning effort was shared at various times with the SDGFP Commission to help provide an overall understanding of the process and relevance of this planning effort to the agency. The draft Plan was shared with the Commission prior to it being available for public comment. A final briefing on the Plan was presented at the June 5-6, 2014 Commission meeting, at which time the SDGFP Commission endorsed the South Dakota Wildlife Action Plan Revision.

Agencies and Native American Tribes

A list was assembled of 55 local, state, and federal agencies with responsibility for land or natural resource management, Native American tribes, universities with wildlife or biology departments, and a few quasi-governmental entities, such as joint ventures ([Appendix V](#)).

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Periodic contacts were made with these entities to update them on planning progress and to solicit input on specific information needs. Examples include multiple contacts regarding the draft species of greatest conservation need list and requests for input on monitoring programs conducted by respective entities. All comments on the SGCN list were considered, and monitoring suggestions were added to the monitoring programs list ([Appendix E](#)) to make it more comprehensive and reflective of entities besides SDGFP. As described in Section 6.4, input was also specifically sought on existing conservation initiatives and potential methods of identifying conservation opportunity areas. Several species experts, as described below, were affiliated with state or federal agencies. A lack of input from these conservation partners did not necessarily indicate a lack of engagement in the process, as some entities responded to requests that they had no comments or no specific feedback to offer on particular topics.

Species and Taxonomic Experts

A list of 56 individuals was assembled of state and regional experts on rare species or species groups to request their assistance at various planning stages. This group included both internal staff and experts from other agencies and private conservation organizations. Individuals were asked to categorize their expertise by one or more of the following categories: aquatic invertebrates, fishes, terrestrial invertebrates, herptiles, birds, or mammals. Of those who expressed a willingness to assist in reviewing and modifying the species of greatest conservation need list, 18 were from state, tribal, or regional colleges or universities, 5 were private contractor biologists or associated with an NGO, and 9 were from state or federal land or resource agencies. Many of these experts also assisted in identifying research and survey needs described in [Appendices G – K](#).

External public

The general public was informed about the planning process and offered various input opportunities. The general public was also surveyed in a follow-up attitude survey conducted during the Plan revision process to better understand specific attitudes and to assist the agency in communication strategies.

7.2 Coordination with Other Agencies and Tribes

Agencies, universities, and Native American tribes ([Appendix V](#)) were contacted at intervals throughout the planning process. Specific contacts were as follows:

1. May 10, 2012 memo to introduce the revision process; inform them of the Plan website, which included background information and a draft species of greatest conservation need list; to invite comments on the draft species of greatest conservation need list; and to offer them the opportunity to meet with the Science Team upon request. Several responses were received, particularly sharing respective agency rare species lists. These comments were considered by the Science Team. In most cases, the species did not qualify for the species of greatest conservation need list because they did not fit the established criteria.

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2. November 30, 2012 memo to inform them of upcoming Open Houses, to share the final species of greatest conservation need list, to request input on relevant conservation initiatives that should be considered during Plan preparation, and to remind them of the use of the agency's website as the primary communication tool during the revision process.
3. December 6, 2012 email invitation to state and federal resource agencies and tribes with responsibilities in western South Dakota to invite them to a meeting held prior to the Rapid City Open House.
4. February 3, 2013 memo to present an update on the planning process, to share the specific content of the website, and to again share the species of greatest conservation need list.
5. March 6, 2013 memo to update them on recent planning progress, to outline a draft approach to defining terrestrial conservation opportunity areas, to share the proposed approach to defining aquatic conservation opportunity areas, and to request suggested conservation opportunity areas for inclusion in the Plan. Several comments were received regarding the definition of conservation opportunity areas, and these comments were considered by the Science Team.
6. August 6, 2013 memo to circulate and request feedback on a draft listing of research and survey needs related to species, habitats, species groups, and habitat- or species-specific restoration needs. Comments received were used to update this information.
7. September 5, 2013 memo to circulate and request feedback on a draft listing of current wildlife monitoring programs. Comments received were used to update this listing.
8. May 8, 2014 memo to inform them of the Plan's comment period, which lasted from May 7 through June 6, 2014.

Agencies and tribes in western South Dakota were invited to a meeting that preceded the Rapid City Open House on December 12, 2012. Invitees included 13 representatives from the U.S. Forest Service, 4 from the National Park Service, 2 from the Bureau of Land Management, 2 from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1 from the U.S. Geological Survey, 4 from Native American tribes, 4 from state wildlife agencies in South Dakota and Wyoming, and 1 from the South Dakota State University Extension Service. A webinar was organized by USFWS refuge staff in eastern South Dakota. Six USFWS staff participated in the webinar to learn more about the planning process and provide input on planning priorities. An additional meeting was held with USFWS Private Lands Staff in Brookings, South Dakota, prior to the Sioux Falls Open House on December 13, 2012. The purpose of this meeting was similar to that of the USFWS refuge staff webinar.

7.3 Public Participation Opportunities

The SDGFP website has provided updates on State Wildlife Grant-funded projects since this funding source became available, in addition to information about the original Wildlife Action Plan (<http://gfp.sd.gov/wildlife/management/plans/wildlife-action-plan.aspx>). The website was enhanced for use as a primary communication tool for sharing information about the planning process with the general public. Statewide news releases were used to publicize specific input opportunities.

1. The Plan revision website was established in May 2012. Text included background information explaining the function of the Plan and reasons for its revision, Plan requirements, a proposed

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schedule and planning process overview, questions and answers for likely questions, a description of changes intended for the revised document compared to the original plan, and an introduction to upcoming public attitude surveys.

2. A statewide news release was circulated in August 2012 informing the public of the planning process and offering the opportunity to comment on the draft species of greatest conservation need. Two comments were received and considered.
3. The website was updated in August 2012 with a comment form for input on the species of greatest conservation need list.
4. A statewide news release was circulated in early December 2012 informing the public of upcoming Open Houses to be held in Rapid City and Sioux Falls.
5. Open Houses were held on December 12 and 13, 2012 at SDGFP Outdoor Campuses in the state's largest cities, Rapid City and Sioux Falls. The Open Houses included introductory remarks, a PowerPoint presentation on the planning framework and process, and map displays showing components being considered for conservation opportunity areas. Specific comment forms were available for use to be handed in or mailed at a later time. Presenters at the Open Houses included SDGFP staff and contractors at both events. Attendees at the Outdoor Campus West Open House included a SDGFP Commissioner and 2 members of the public. No members of the public chose to attend the event at the Outdoor Campus East.
6. A statewide news release was shared with the public on May 7, 2014, informing them of the opportunity to provide feedback on the full Plan through June 6, 2014.

7.4 Review of Draft South Dakota Wildlife Action Plan

In addition to the opportunity to provide input on the species of greatest conservation need list and to share questions and concerns during the Open Houses, the public was offered the opportunity to comment on the draft Plan during a five-week comment period from May 7 through June 6, 2014.

Six entities submitted comments. Following conclusion of the comment opportunity for the public, agencies, and tribes, members of the Wildlife Action Plan Science Team and Outreach Team met to discuss all comments received and determine how to respond to each of the points raised. The comment letters/emails and specific resolutions are found in [Appendix W](#). Not every point raised by commenters was specifically addressed in Appendix W. Some points were suggested policies for SDGFP apart from the Plan preparation or were suggestions for species of greatest conservation need. The latter suggestions were considered during previous public and agency comment periods, because of the necessity to finalize this list earlier in the planning process.

The Plan was submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for their review and approval, a review process that included the participation of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. SDGFP subsequently received and reviewed a listing of minor corrections needed and additional points for consideration. The final Plan was then submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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7.5 Understanding South Dakota Citizens – Wildlife Values

SDGFP has a long history of surveying its citizens and resource users to track attitudes and trends and to identify areas that may need additional public involvement or better communication between the agency and its constituents. As part of the Plan revision, SDGFP coordinated with the South Dakota Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit at South Dakota State University to conduct an attitude survey of South Dakotans. The survey repeated some questions asked during a survey conducted during the original Plan's preparation in addition to new questions reflecting new wildlife or environmental issues.

The complete reports from this survey can be found on the SDGFP website

(<http://gfp.sd.gov/wildlife/management/plans/docs/WildlifeValueOrientationsReport.pdf>). The report citations are included in the References Cited portion of this document.

Executive Summary

Prepared by Larry Gigliotti, Ph.D., U.S. Geological Survey, South Dakota Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, South Dakota State University, Department of Natural Resource Management, Brookings, SD, 57007

Wildlife and Environmental Attitudes of South Dakota Citizens – 2012

This survey of South Dakota citizens' wildlife and environmental attitudes was conducted in 2012 in conjunction with South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks' (SDGFP) revision of the South Dakota Wildlife Action Plan (WAP). The WAP was first approved in 2006 and SDGFP made a commitment to review and revise the plan five years following its approval. This survey, in part, addresses the eighth essential element in the WAP, each state's provisions to provide public participation in the development, revisions, and implementation of its strategy. The purpose of the survey was to identify trends as well as mapping current environmental attitudes, providing a better understanding of South Dakota citizens.

The mail survey questionnaire (11 by 8½ booklets) was developed with input from SDGFP staff and survey results were analyzed by South Dakota State University. Two versions of the questionnaire were developed to maximize the number of questions asked while minimizing the overall length of the survey. Initial sample size was 2,400 randomly selected South Dakota citizens (94 addresses were undeliverable) and 1,138 usable questionnaires (49%) were returned. A total of 45 questions measured an array of wildlife and environmental attitudes and 12 items measured people's Wildlife Value Orientations, plus questions measured peoples' participation in hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing and a few demographic variables.

Results

In general, most South Dakota residents have positive attitudes towards wildlife and are supportive of efforts to maintain quality habitat for wildlife. The importance of wildlife is best summarized by the

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results showing that 80% of South Dakota residents reported fish and wildlife contributes to a high “quality of life” and only about 1% reporting that fish and wildlife detracts from their “quality of life” in South Dakota. However, there can be some controversy when it comes to issues involving specific wildlife species. For example, this survey measured a greater level of disagreement regarding issues involving specific wildlife species, such as, prairie dogs, mountain lions, rattlesnakes, bats, river otters, and ospreys.

Controversy surrounding some species of wildlife generally stems from different opinions on how wildlife should be viewed/treated/managed. These differences are best summarized by the Wildlife Value Orientation (WVO) scale, which measures a general core value people have towards wildlife. The WVO scale measures peoples’ wildlife values along a continuum of utilitarian values at one end and mutualist values at the other end and classifies people into four groups (Utilitarian, Mutualist, Pluralist, and Distanced) ([Table 7-1](#)). Pluralists can hold both value orientations and their attitude towards a specific issue is dependent upon the given situation, while people with a distanced orientation do not hold either orientation. Utilitarians value wildlife primarily for their use or benefit to humans while mutualists view all wildlife as deserving of rights and caring. Such contrasting viewpoints can create controversial issues involving a range of wildlife species and management actions. The potential for conflict is also supported by the split in peoples’ attitudes regarding the degree to which wildlife management decisions should favor game animals/fish or rare wildlife species. In general, most South Dakota residents (54%) favored a “balanced approach” on wildlife management decisions regarding game animals/fish versus rare wildlife species with the remaining residents about evenly split between favoring game/fish and rare wildlife species.

The value of the WVO scale lies in its potential to predict how people may respond to various wildlife issues. Utilitarians will generally be supportive of actions that allow use of wildlife classified as game and control of species deemed as harmful to humans, their property, or valued game species. Mutualists will generally be opposed to any management actions that are harmful to any wildlife species. Thus, the WVO of South Dakota residents measured in this survey can be used to estimate attitudes towards wildlife issues not measured by this survey. South Dakotan’ WVO have not change much since last measured in 2004 ([Figure 7-1Figure6 1](#)) and most of the wildlife and environmental attitudes also have remained relatively stable over the past decade.

Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife Viewing. Most South Dakotans have fished (87%) or hunted (60%) at least sometime in their lives, and almost half (49%) reported they have taken trips sometime in their lifetime for which fish and wildlife viewing was the primary purpose of the trip. Overall, 91% of South Dakota residents have participated in some combination of these activities ([Figure 7-2Figure6 2](#)). Participation in one or more of these activities increased peoples’ appreciation for wildlife and also increased the likelihood of holding stronger opinions on various wildlife management issues.

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Table 7-1. Descriptions of the four wildlife value orientations (measured in 2012 for South Dakota residents).

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| <p>UTILITARIAN (53.6%). Believe that wildlife should be used and managed primarily for human benefit. Individuals with a strong utilitarian orientation are more likely to prioritize human well-being over wildlife in their attitudes and behaviors. They are also more likely to find justification for treatment of wildlife in utilitarian terms and to rate actions that result in death or harm to wildlife as being acceptable.</p> <p>MUTUALIST (15.3%). View wildlife as capable of living in relationships of trust with humans, as if part of an extended family, and deserving of rights and caring. Those with a strong mutualism orientation are less likely to support actions resulting in death or harm to wildlife, more likely to engage in welfare-enhancing behaviors for individual wildlife (e.g., feeding), and more likely to view wildlife in human terms (e.g., Bambi).</p> <p>PLURALIST (20.9%). Hold both a mutualism and a utilitarian value orientation toward wildlife. Which of the orientations plays a role is dependent upon the given situation. For certain issues, Pluralists are likely to respond in a manner similar to that of Utilitarians, whereas for other issues they may behave more like Mutualists.</p> <p>DISTANCED (10.2%). Do not hold either a utilitarian or a mutualism orientation. As their label suggests, they tend to be less interested in wildlife and wildlife related issues. The Distanced type is also more likely than the other value types to express fear, or concern for safety, while in the outdoors due to the possibility of negative encounters with wildlife (e.g., risk of being attacked or contracting a disease).</p> |
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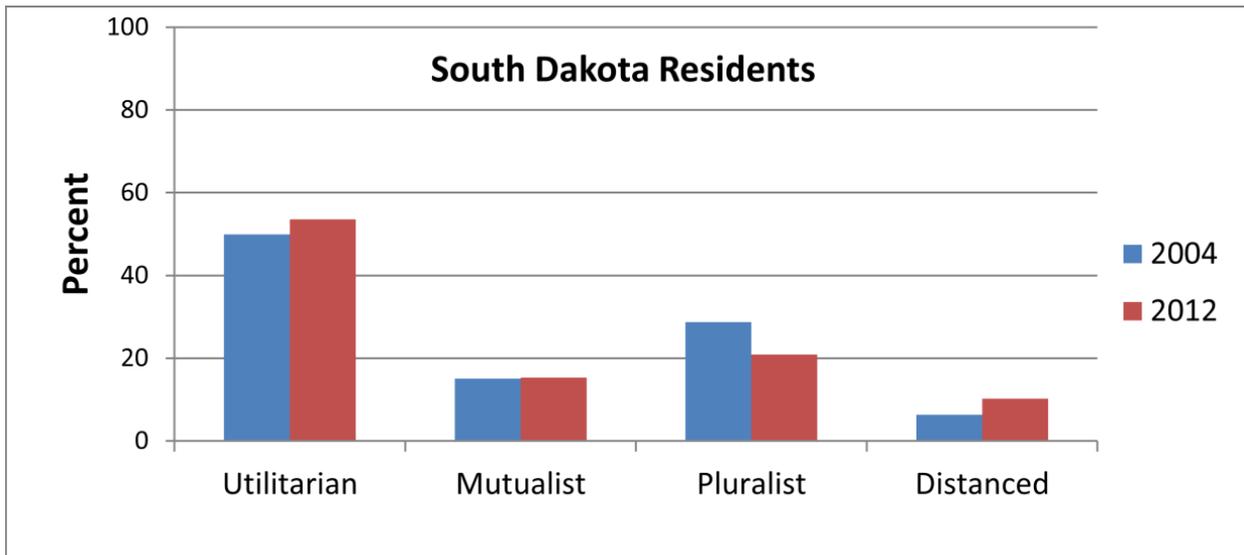


Figure 7-1. South Dakota residents' wildlife value orientations measured in 2004 and 2012.

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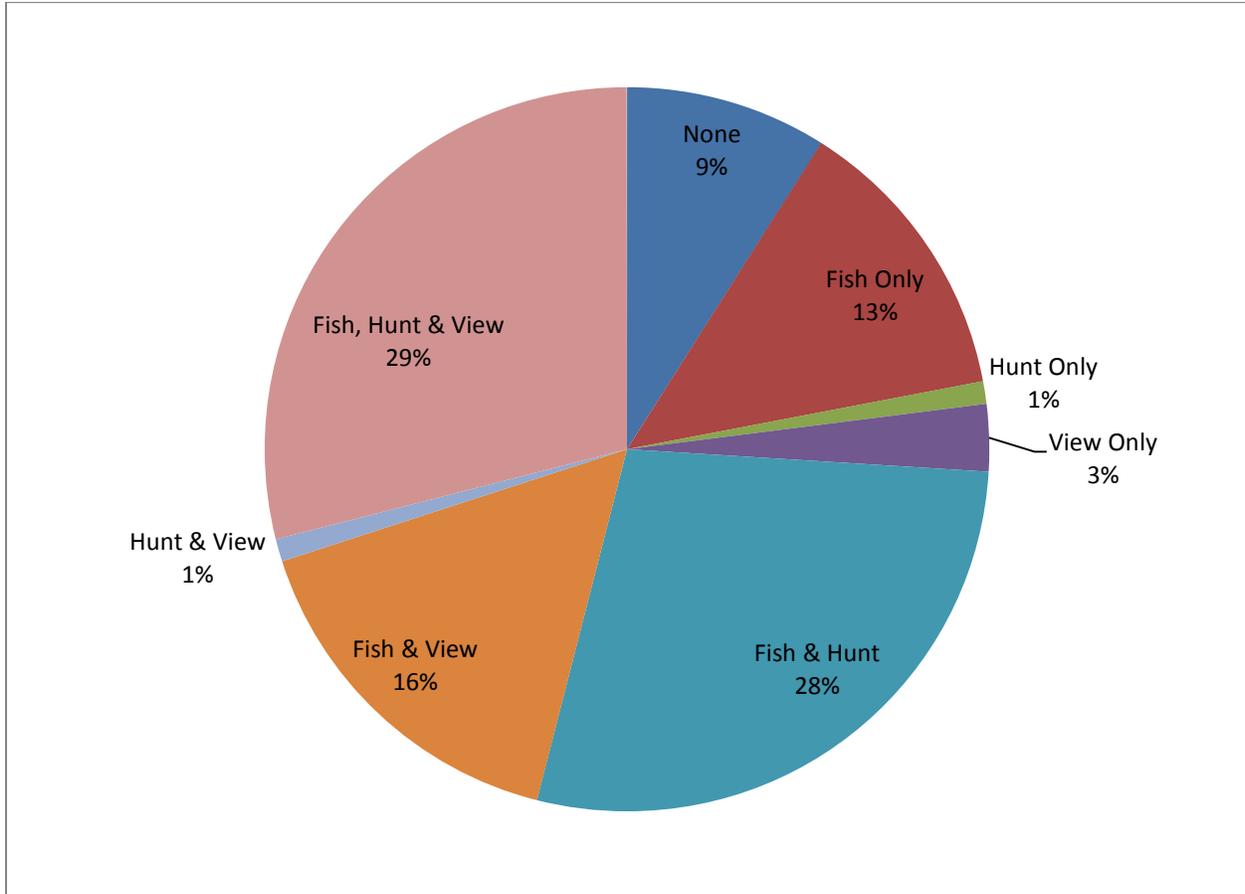


Figure 7-2. Participation in fishing, hunting and/or wildlife viewing trips by South Dakotans sometime during their lifetime (measured in 2012).