

SOUTH DAKOTA GAME, FISH AND PARKS

LAW ENFORCEMENT ANNUAL REPORT

2023



GAME, FISH AND PARKS ADMINISTRATION

KEVIN ROBLING, *Department Secretary* | Pierre

SCOTT SIMPSON, *Deputy Secretary* | Pierre

TOM KIRSCHENMANN, *Wildlife Division Director* | Pierre

JEFF VANMEETEREN, *Parks Division Director* | Pierre

LAW ENFORCEMENT SECTION ADMINISTRATION

SAM SCHELHAAS, *Law Enforcement Chief* | Yankton

BRANDON GUST, *Law Enforcement Deputy Chief* | Madison

KEITH MUTSCHLER, *Law Enforcement Training Supervisor* | Lemmon

NATE STUKEL, *Wildlife Investigator Supervisor* | Gregory

EVAN MEYER, *Wildlife Investigator* | Howard

BRUCE NACHTIGALL, *Law Enforcement Specialist* | Rapid City

JOE KEETON, *Law Enforcement Specialist* | Rapid City

JIM McCORMICK, *Regional CO Supervisor* | Rapid City

BRIAN MEIERS, *District CO Supervisor* | Spearfish

ADAM GEIGLE, *District CO Supervisor* | Rapid City

MIKE APLAND, *District CO Supervisor* | Spearfish

JOSH CARR, *Regional CO Supervisor* | Ft. Pierre

JEFF MARTIN, *District CO Supervisor* | Platte

JOHN MURPHY, *District CO Supervisor* | Ft. Pierre

CORY FLOR, *District CO Supervisor* | Miller

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JEREMY RAKOWICZ, *District CO Supervisor* | Sioux Falls

MATT TALBERT, *District CO Supervisor* | Salem

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KRAIG HAASE, *Regional CO Supervisor* | Watertown

JOE GALBRAITH, *District CO Supervisor* | Ipswich

TIM McCURDY, *District CO Supervisor* | Aberdeen

JAMIE PEKELDER, *District CO Supervisor* | Milbank

JEANNE UECKER, *Law Enforcement Program Assistant* | Pierre



CONSERVATION OFFICERS

DON ALLAWAY | Yankton

DILLON BATES | Winner

JACK BAUMERT | Britton

TOM BECK | Martin

PATRICK BEFFA | Mobridge

ADAM BEHNKE | Clear Lake

ERIC BRUMBAUGH | Platte

JENNA CAPPER | Custer

NICK COCHRAN | Aberdeen

CHEYANNE COLTON | Gregory

CHRIS DEKKER | Rapid City

KENDYLL DEROUCHEY | Gettysburg

JON DUNLAP | Miller

JEFF EDWARDS | Hill City

TAYLOR ETHERINGTON | Lennox

ROSS FEES | Rapid City

CRAIG FISHEL | Sioux Falls

ADAM FUEST | Buffalo

JIM GANSER | Custer

LYNN GEUKE | Plankinton

JEFF GRENDLER | Brookings

JASON HAMAR | Kadoka

LOGAN HAMMER | Estelline

JASON HAMIL | Pierre

JUSTIN HARMAN | Brandon

JARED HILL | Sioux Falls

TAYLOR KIRCHNER | Tyndall

JACKSON KNIGHT | Watertown

DIANA LANDEGENT | Chamberlain

SETH LORTON | Hot Springs

KYLE LENZNER | Watertown

TRAVIS MARCH | Chamberlain

CALVIN MEYER | Webster

EDGAR MEZA | Lemmon

AUSTIN NORTON | Webster

ALEX OSBORNE | Salem

RYAN PEARSON | Sturgis

SHANE PEDERSEN | Redfield

DEREK PELTON | Wall

DYLAN PETERSON | Ft. Pierre

TANNER PIETZ | Vermillion

CHRISTOPHER SCHIERA | Lake Preston

D.J. SCHROEDER | Hot Springs

JACOB SCHWINT | Belle Fourche

ANNA SELLS | Sisseton

TONY STOKELY | Elk Point

BLAKE SWANSON | Milbank

CODY SYMENS | Madison

JOSH THOMPSON | Spearfish

ZACH THOMSEN | Clark

RON TIETSORT | Custer

JOSH VANDENBOSCH | Canton

ERIC VOIGT | Ipswich

WYATT WEBER | Presho

LAW ENFORCEMENT

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

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NEW CONSERVATION OFFICERS



ALEX OSBORNE joined the Conservation Officer Training Program in November 2022. Alex grew up in Vermillion, South Dakota. He graduated from Dakota Wesleyan University with a major in Wildlife Management and a minor in Criminal Justice. Prior to becoming a Conservation Officer, Alex worked as a program assistant with the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks. After completing the training program, Alex was assigned the Salem duty station.



JACKSON KNIGHT joined the Conservation Officer Training Program in November 2022. Jackson was raised in Emmetsburg, Iowa. He graduated from South Dakota State University with a major in Natural Resource Law Enforcement. Prior to becoming a Conservation Officer, Jackson worked as a Corrections Officer for the Brookings County Detention Center. After completing the training program, Jackson was assigned the Watertown duty station.



CHEYANNE COLTON joined the Conservation Officer Training Program in November 2022. Cheyanne grew up in Lingle Wyoming. She graduated from the University of Wyoming with a major in Wildlife and Fisheries Biology and Management. Prior to becoming a Conservation Officers, Cheyanne worked two summers for South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks as an intern. After completing the training program, Cheyanne was assigned the Gregory duty station.



JACK BAUMERT joined the Conservation Officer Training Program in November 2022. Jack grew up in West Point Nebraska. He graduated from South Dakota State University with a major in Wildlife and Fisheries Science. Prior to becoming a Conservation Officer, Jack worked for South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks as an intern. After completing the training program, Jack was assigned the Britton duty station.



ANNA SELLS joined the Conservation Officer Training Program in February 2023. Anna grew up in Granville Iowa. She graduated from South Dakota State University with a major in Wildlife and Fisheries. Prior to becoming a Conservation Officer, Anna worked as a Deputy Sheriff for Brookings County. After completing the training program, Anna was assigned the Sisseton duty station.



ADAM FUEST joined the Conservation Officer Training Program in February 2023. Adam grew up in Buffalo New York. He graduated from SUNY Cobleskill with a major in Wildlife Management. Prior to becoming a Conservation Officer, Adam worked as a field biologist for the National Park Service. After completing the training program, Adam was assigned the Buffalo duty station.



DEREK PELTON joined the Conservation Officer Training Program in February 2023. Derek grew up in Avon South Dakota. He graduated from the University of South Dakota with a major in Sociology and a minor in Criminal Justice. Prior to becoming a Conservation Officer, Derek worked as a 911 dispatcher. After completing the training program, Derek was assigned the Wall duty station.

2023 LAW ENFORCEMENT ANNUAL REPORT

The 2023 Law Enforcement Annual Report contains a summary of the work that was done by our conservation officers this past year. It is not a comprehensive summary, but it is a snapshot of 2023. This report consists of numbers and stats that are tracked annually, it includes case highlights from across the state, and recognition of conservation officers who have received an award for their work. This report summarizes a lot of their law enforcement efforts, but the job of a conservation officer is so much more than that. Conservation officers lead HuntSafe programs across the state, they visit with landowners about a variety of topics, they present programs to schools and civic organizations, they respond to nuisance animal complaints, they answer hundreds of

questions from the public, and they have a basic knowledge of almost every program that South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) administers. Conservation officers protect our fish and game along with our parks and public lands relentlessly. They are passionate about their work because they hunt, they fish, and they camp as well. The conservation officers that work for GFP are some of the best in the nation, and I am proud that I get to serve along side the men and women that wear the uniform of a South Dakota Conservation Officer.

Sam Schelhaas

LAW ENFORCEMENT SECTION CHIEF



CASE FEATURE:

PUBLIC TIP LEADS TO ARREST



During the 2022 opening day of East River deer season, District Conservation Officer Supervisor Tim McCurdy received a call regarding an individual in a maroon Ford F250 pickup with grey rockers and game rack mounted on the back of the truck. The individual was said to be shooting at deer from the vehicle or road near Hecla, South Dakota. The informant, who was in a deer stand, stated he heard two shots from a high-powered rifle shooting towards a herd of deer in a corn field. McCurdy was 15 miles away and responded to the area to try and locate the vehicle. Due to darkening conditions, Officer McCurdy was unable to locate the vehicle.

The following day, Wildlife Conservation Officer Nick Cochran received a phone call from a landowner who found two whitetail bucks lying dead in a corn field. This was the same location Officer McCurdy received information about the previous night. After investigating the area, Officer Cochran determined the deer were in fact shot with a high-powered rifle, and the rifle shots came from where the maroon Ford pickup was observed.

McCurdy and Cochran posted information about the incident on social media and the Turn-in-Poachers (TIPs) webpage which generated publicity and phone calls. By the end of the week, Officers McCurdy and Cochran had received numerous calls regarding the maroon Ford pickup and the name associated with the vehicle.

One informant sent pictures of the maroon Ford pickup parked at a residence in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Pictures of the vehicle parked in the suspect's driveway were provided to the informant confirming a match of the vehicle he had seen. The suspect was no stranger to wildlife violations, as he had been convicted in years past for shooting from the road, trespassing, and killing deer illegally. In 2008, he was convicted of killing a trophy whitetail deer within the city limits of Sioux Falls that measured over 200 inches.

District Conservation Officer Supervisor Jeremy Rakowicz, McCurdy, and Cochran conducted several interviews with the suspect and ultimately, the suspect confessed to shooting the two bucks. The suspect was charged with two counts of knowing trespass, two counts of shooting at big game from the road, two counts of wanton waste, and one count of hunting big game without a license. A plea deal was offered to the suspect if he would agree to the loss of hunting privileges for 5 years. The plea deal was accepted, the suspect received a fine of \$1,096.50, five-year hunting revocation, and \$4,000 in civil fines.

This investigation is a great example of the TIPs program's success. Without the public's involvement and willingness to bring information forward, the identity of the involved party may never have been known. The outreach through social media played a huge role in the successful prosecution of this case.



CASE FEATURE

DEER HUNTING DURING CLOSED SEASON

On October 23, 2023, Custer Conservation Officer Ron Tietsort received a call from the Custer County highway department. One of their employees was mowing the road ditch east of Hermosa and found a dead deer in the ditch.

Upon arrival, the deer had been gutted, partially skinned, and left. The hide was thrown over the fence.

There was 00 buck shot found in the hide and in the carcass of the deer.

A Scheels plastic shopping bag was caught in the barbed wire fence and a Scheels purchase receipt was laying in the ditch near the dead deer.

The receipt was from the Rapid City Scheels store for the purchase of two boxes of 12-gauge 00 buck shot shells bought on September 30, 2023. The shells were purchased using a credit card.

Regional Conservation Officer Supervisor, Jim McCormick spoke to customer service, head of GFP Licensing at the Rapid City Scheels store, and was able to get a copy of the original receipt, the bank name, and bank phone number for the credit card account off the receipt.

Officers were also able to get security camera images from the Scheels store of the suspect purchasing the 00 buck shot shells.

Conservation Officer Jim Ganser completed a subpoena to the bank for the name of the credit card holder.

The credit card owner information came back to an Airman from Ellsworth Airforce base living off base in Rapid City.

Officer Ganser applied for a search warrant for the residence and vehicle of the suspect.

Officers conducted a search of the apartment and vehicle of the suspect and recovered the 12-gauge shotgun and the remaining shot shells purchased at the Scheels store.

The suspect admitted to shooting the deer with the buckshot before the firearm deer season. He told officers that he had shot the deer on October 22 west of Rapid City off Victory Lake Road. He said he loaded the deer in the back of his vehicle without tagging or field dressing the



deer. He took the deer to his house and left it in his truck overnight. Sometime the next day he drove east of Hermosa and started to field dress and skin the deer in the ditch. He said the deer had become rotted, and he left the deer in the ditch with intentions of coming back with a saw to remove the antlers. When he returned the deer was gone.

The suspect was cited for hunting big game during closed season and failure to tag.

Additional charges of wanton waste and illegal methods were discussed with the Custer County state's attorney.

In the end, the suspect worked out a deal with the state's attorney and was charged with hunting big game during a closed season. He received a \$346.50 fine, ten days in jail suspended, loss of hunting privileges for one year, and \$1,000 civil damages.



CASE FEATURE

BOOZE CRUISING DEER POACHER

On September 3, 2020, Wildlife Conservation Officer Kendyll DeRouche responded to reports of two dead deer found west of Highway 1804 in Potter County, South Dakota. The remains of the carcasses were sparse, but it was observed that clean cuts were made along the spine to remove the back straps of the deer. There was no evidence of a vehicular collision along the roadway within the immediate area.

On September 4, 2020, DeRouche received another call from a landowner regarding two more deer found dead in Potter County about a mile from the first two deer investigated. The landowner stated that the deer had been shot and backstraps cut off both deer. The landowner provided pictures of the dead deer, and both appeared to have had their backstraps removed based on the clean cuts made along the spines of the

carcasses. There was no other damage to the carcasses.

DeRouche investigated the report and found the two dead deer. One was a doe, which was located on the west side of the highway, and the other was a fawn which was located 20 yards on the east side of the highway. The tool marks along the spine of the fawn were obvious where the backstraps had been removed. Officer DeRouche also found three spent red 12-gauge Winchester Super X and three spent green 12-gauge Herter shotgun shells along the side of the road pavement within 30 yards of the carcass, possibly indicating multiple suspects. All four deer appeared to have been killed around the same time within the last week.

On October 8, 2020, WCO DeRouche received information from a confidential informant regarding illegal hunting activity that had taken place in Potter

County. Officer DeRouche was informed that two individuals were involved in shooting 18 deer in Potter County during nighttime hours. The informant also mentioned that backstraps were cut off the deer.

On November 14, 2020, Conservation Officer John Murphy informed DeRouche that one of her suspects had been arrested on November 13 and was in the Hughes County Jail. Around 10 a.m. the same day, Conservation Officer Tyler Kregelberg contacted DeRouche regarding one of his cases and was requesting help retrieving evidence from his suspects residence in Gettysburg, S.D. This suspect was also a suspect in DeRouche's case. After Officer Kregelberg finished with his case investigation that day, DeRouche got consent from one of the suspects to interview them about her case.





DeRouchev and other officers interviewed multiple suspects about the poached deer in Potter County. The reoccurring theme from these interviews was that this group of young adult males would, “Drive around drinking at all hours of the night and shoot whatever they could find in their headlights.”

Over the course of the investigation, officers were able to obtain a search warrant for one of the suspects homes. It was proven that at least 12 deer were killed in Potter County without proper licensing and with no regard for laws. Deer were killed throughout all times of the year. Fifty-Five dead heads in various stages of decomposition were removed from the defendant’s home in Gettysburg. Dead heads are illegal to possess for any reason unless authorized by GFP officials. During interviews of the other suspects, videos of the defendant were also found where he was seen roping two live whitetail bucks and tying them to the hitch of his pickup truck, while he attempted to ear tag them. There were numerous other videos and photos including the defendant posing with a dead trophy whitetail buck at nighttime and out of season.

Pending 3 years in the court system, a ruling was finally made regarding the case. The defendant was initially facing 15 Class 1 misdemeanor charges for Big Game-Closed Season, Big Game-No License, Hunting at Night and Unlawful Possession of Big Game Animals. Plea agreements were arranged, and the individual pled guilty to 12 Class 1 misdemeanors for Hunting or Taking Big Game During Nighttime, Closed Season, or Without License in violation of SDCL 41-8-2, 41-8-18, and 22-3-3, all class 1 misdemeanors carrying a maximum penalty of one year in jail and a two thousand dollar fine.

On December 19, 2023, the defendant was sentenced to the following:

- \$24,000 civil fines (\$2,000 per count)
- \$6,000 criminal fines (\$500 per count)
- \$1,158 court costs (\$96.50 per count)
- Four years jail, all suspended but 30 days
- Hunting privileges revoked for 8 years
- Forfeiture of all firearms involved in the crimes.

CASE FEATURE

SHOOTING FROM THE HIGHWAY

The west district of Region 3 was extremely shorthanded heading into the fall of 2023 even with Wildlife Conservation Officers Osborne and Schiera both joining the team in 2023. The district decided to work as a team and patrol both the Mitchell and Huron areas since both had been void of a resident wildlife conservation officer for several years. Saturday afternoon of the pheasant opener Officers Geuke, Schiera, Osborne and District Conservation Officer Supervisor Talbert met at the Huron Office and laid out the plans for the day.

As the light faded that evening, Officer Talbert received a call from Officer Schiera concerning a sedan they had crossed paths with numerous times throughout the day. This particular vehicle caught the officers' attention due the odd driving pattern and odd hunting style of the occupants.

Officer Schiera recommended that Officer Talbert head over toward his location, as this sedan was operating unconventionally. The passenger of the sedan was seen hanging out from an open door while the vehicle driving

along the road in the vicinity of several deer. Officer Schiera explained that the vehicle currently had two occupants and was last seen with the passenger hanging out the door while deer were running next to the vehicle in a field. Officer Talbert headed over to the location and worked his way behind the vehicle. Talbert notified Officer Osborne and had him head the suspects off as they began their journey back to Huron now that it was getting dark. Officer Osborne positioned himself perfectly as the suspect sedan crossed paths just in front of him.

Osborne was able to get behind the vehicle and initiate his emergency lights and get the sedan stopped. Officer Talbert arrived and began securing weapons. The officers had to rely on their translation abilities along with non-verbal communication techniques to effectively convey what had been witnessed by the officers.

It was determined that the subjects had been getting dropped off and had been trespassing on multiple different properties hunting rabbits, squirrel, and deer. The subjects had one bolt action .22lr and one AR style .22lr. They had been unsuccessful in harvesting any rabbits or squirrels and had only managed to wound several deer with the .22s. The subjects had never had any big game licenses and had been accessing the rifles hidden in the truck through the rear passenger seat. It was believed they did this to hide the guns in case they were stopped and conceal the fact they were shooting from the vehicle.

While Officer Osborne was visiting with the occupants of the sedan Officers Geuke and





Schiera navigated the route re-tracing the suspects path and were able to pinpoint several locations where the suspects had shot at deer and succeeded in locating .22 casings. After collecting the casing Geuke and Schiera contacted one of the Wildlife Damage Management Specialists and coordinated a meeting with him to utilize his thermal optic to assist in locating any injured or dead deer. They were unable to locate any dead deer.

The investigation concluded with the suspects getting a total of four charges, two Big Game Closed Season and two Big Game Shooting from Highway. There was approximately \$600 in criminal penalties, 20 days of jail sentenced and suspended and all parties having their hunting privileges revoked.

CHARGES

- 2 Big Game Closed Season
- 2 Big Game Shooting from the Highway
- \$600 in criminal penalties
- 20 day of jail, all suspended
- All parties hunting privileges revoked.

MULTI-STATE INVESTIGATION

A multi-year, joint investigation between the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department culminated in 2023. South Dakota Conservation Officers worked with Wyoming Game Wardens to track down several trophy bull elk that were unlawfully taken in the state of Wyoming and transported to South Dakota. South Dakota Conservation Officers were able to obtain search warrants for evidence in the case located in South Dakota and seized nine unlawfully possessed bull elk and worked with prosecutors to return the elk to the state of Wyoming.

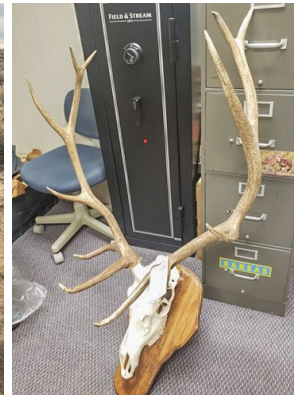
The investigation that began in 2018 finally culminated in December 2023 after five of six defendants pled guilty to a variety of charges. The sixth defendant from Wentzville, Missouri still has an active warrant for their arrest.

The investigation showed that two landowners, who own property in the coveted Wyoming elk area 100 northeast of Wamsutter, had illegally transferred their area 100 type 1 landowner elk licenses to two other individuals. Through the course of this investigation, Wyoming Game Wardens worked closely with their counterparts in South Dakota, Kansas, Missouri, and Idaho to locate the suspects, and these Game Wardens assisted Wyoming with conducting multiple interviews and seizing evidence. South Dakota Game Wardens also executed a search warrant on a residence in Belle Fourche, South Dakota and seized multiple wildlife mounts, along with other evidence. The investigation showed that multiple bull elk were illegally killed in Wyoming elk area 100 along with another bull elk illegally killed in Wyoming elk area 6.

The suspects in this case were charged with numerous violations and each plead guilty to charges.

A suspect from South Dakota was charged with three counts of making false statements to obtain Wyoming resident licenses and two counts of illegally killing bull elk without the proper licenses. This suspect pled guilty to three counts of making false statements to obtain Wyoming resident licenses and was ordered to pay \$13,009 in restitution, \$70 in fines, and received a six-year hunting suspension.

A suspect from Idaho was charged with one count of killing a bull elk without the proper license and this suspect pled guilty to an amended charge of accessory to



transferring an elk license. This suspect was ordered to pay a fine of \$1,070 and received a three-year suspension of any game and fish privilege.

A suspect from Kansas was charged with and pled guilty to one count of killing a bull elk without the proper license and was ordered to pay \$5,000 in restitution, a \$220 fine and received a ten-year hunting suspension.

The landowners in this case were each charged with three counts of being an accessory to the illegal killing of bull elk without the proper licenses and two counts of transferring their landowner elk licenses. One landowner pled guilty to one count of transferring a license and was ordered to pay a fine of \$1,070 and received a three-year hunting suspension. The other landowner pled guilty to one count of accessory to killing a bull elk without a proper license and one count of transferring a license and ordered to pay a \$5,070 fine and received a three-year hunting suspension.

The last suspect in this case from Missouri was charged with one count of killing a bull elk without the proper license and has an active warrant for their arrest.

Fines and restitution totaled \$25,509.

ANGOSTURA RESERVOIR INCREASED EFFORTS IN 2023



In 1949, the Cheyenne River in southwest South Dakota was dammed, creating four-thousand-acre Angostura Reservoir. Angostura Reservoir is home to excellent walleye and bass fishing. It is a great lake to ski and tube, and during the hot summer months in Fall River County, it is an oasis for those trying to escape the heat. The lake is bordered by a state recreation area, private campgrounds, and private homes and is visited by many people every year. During the peak growing season, the water levels recede due to irrigation needs creating some great beaches in the area.

Unfortunately, one beach has grown in notoriety in the past several years for being a party beach. Fights, drugs, alcohol, and rowdy behavior have become common on Breakers Beach, and it is a deterrent for many of the visitors who come to spend their day on the shores of Angostura. These types of activities are unpleasant, unsafe, and are contrary to the mission of the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks. Because of that, law enforcement increased efforts to address these issues in the summer of 2023.

The conservation officers located in the district

committed to an increased presence at Angostura over the course of the summer. Along with that, on two separate occasions, conservation officers from across the state were brought in to provide an extra level of enforcement efforts. During these two weekends there were 8-10 conservation officers working to curb the illicit behavior taking place. Over the course of the summer there were 121 individuals charged with 167 violations. There were 39 individuals arrested and taken to jail. Along with the efforts from the Game, Fish and Parks, the South Dakota Highway Patrol and the Fall River Sheriff's Office patrolled the area and addressed many of the violations on the highways nearby.

The efforts paid off and by late summer it was common to see families and other beachgoers using Breakers Beach in a manner consistent with the mission of the Game, Fish and Parks. Word got out that Breakers Beach was not the place to party anymore. These efforts will continue into 2024 and plans are set to provide an increased presence at Angostura Reservoir for the second straight year.

OPERATION DRY WATER



Operation Dry Water (ODW) is a year-round boating under the influence awareness and enforcement campaign. The mission of ODW is to reduce the number of alcohol- and drug-related accidents and fatalities through increased recreational boater awareness and by fostering a stronger and more visible deterrent to alcohol use on the water.

Every year since 2009 South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Conservation Officers (COs) have participated in this nation-wide effort to make our lakes and rivers safer for everyone and encourage responsible use of our waterways. Every summer a three-day weekend is chosen where COs increase their enforcement efforts on random waterbodies throughout the state. Operation Dry Water’s heightened awareness and enforcement three-day weekend takes place annually around the July Fourth weekend. This is a busy boating weekend across

the nation and officers want to contact as many boaters as possible.

The purpose of the enhanced enforcement component of the Operation Dry Water campaign is to deter boaters from boating under the influence of drugs or alcohol. When boaters choose to boat impaired, they are endangering not only themselves, but the many other boaters on the water as well.

With alcohol use remaining the leading contributing factor in recreational boater deaths, the primary focus of the ODW campaign and of those who support it is to change the cultural acceptance of drinking and boating and help boaters have safe and fun recreational boating experiences. South Dakota COs contact as many boaters as possible to spread this message of responsible boat operation!

2023 OPERATION DRY WATER STATISTICS

Region	Officers	Vessels	Boaters	Citations	Warning	BUI	Non-Boat Violations	Lakes
Western	26	198	594	32	12	3	8	Angostura, Iron Creek, Orman, Pactola, Sheridan
Central	16	490	2196	12	68	3	26	Lake Oahe
Southeast	19	323	1156	26	68	9	9	Missouri River, Byron, Carthage, Henry, Madison, McCook, Mitchell, Thompson, Vermillion
Northeast	15	393	1030	23	47	3	10	Amsden, Byron, Clear, Cochrane, Elm, Enemy Swim, Kampeska, Mina, Pickerel, Poinsett, Richmond, Roy, Waubay
Total	76	1404	4976	93	195	18	53	28 Operations/Patrols in 2023

TURN IN POACHERS (TIPS) PROGRAM

The Turn-In-Poachers (TIPs) program is a partnership between South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks (GFP) and the non-profit organization, Wildlife Protection, Inc. This joint venture was born out of a desire for South Dakota's Sportsmen to "police" their own. With approximately 80 Conservation Officers called upon to cover about 75,000 square miles of land and 1,200 square miles of water in South Dakota it is evident that they can't be everywhere all the time. Most times the best witnesses are the landowners and resource users themselves. So, in an effort to provide easy and convenient ways to report violations, TIPs has become a core component of GFP's Law Enforcement efforts.

Through TIPs, a 24 hour, seven day a week toll free number, 1-888-OVERBAG (683-7224), has been set up to field reports from the public regarding hunting, fishing, and trapping violations. Information may also be provided through a link to GFP's website. Just like those calling in on the telephone, the information entered in this form may be reported by those who wish to remain anonymous. A wildlife violation may be reported through the website at gfp.sd.gov/tips.

This partnership between government and the private sector allows those who provide information to be compensated for their information. Since the inception of the program in 1984, over \$200,000 in rewards has been paid out to people who observe and report violations. The funding for this program comes from a variety of areas; however, one of the most popular is by sportsmen themselves.

During the 2022 TIPs year (which began July 1, 2022, and ended June 30, 2023) 394 investigations and 271 arrests could be directly attributed to information provided through the program. From this information, violators were fined \$31,697 and required to pay \$33,200 in civil damages. Judges sentenced violators to 890 days in jail for their crimes (885 days were suspended). TIPs paid out \$8,699 in rewards.

For nearly 40 years, the South Dakota Turn-In-Poachers program has been a shining example of what can be done to protect a public trust resource when government, private industry, sportsmen and the general public come together to address a common problem.

**HELP US PROTECT OUR
RESOURCES FOR FUTURE
GENERATIONS.**



TIPS PROGRAM TOTALS TIPs Year 2022

- 394 INVESTIGATIONS
- 271 ARRESTS
- \$31,697 FINES
- \$33,200 LIQUIDATED CIVIL DAMAGES
- 890 DAYS OF JAIL
(885 days suspended)
- \$8,699 REWARDS PAID

TIPS PROGRAM TOTALS 1984 to June 30, 2023

- 13,572 INVESTIGATIONS
- 5,311 ARRESTS
- \$979,913 FINES
- \$933,775 LIQUIDATED CIVIL DAMAGES
- \$207,004 REWARDS PAID

2023 STATEWIDE VIOLATION STATISTICS

HUNTING VIOLATIONS = 759

78 | Big Game - Closed Season
60 | Big Game - Unlawful Possession
37 | Nontoxic Shot Areas for Small Game
36 | Artificial Light/Night Vision
35 | Protected Bird - Hunt or Possess
35 | Waterfowl - Unplugged Shotgun
34 | Big Game - Wrong Unit
27 | Small Game - Shooting from a Motor Vehicle
27 | Waterfowl - No Federal Stamp
24 | Small Game - Unlawful Possession
23 | Game Bird Transportation/Packaging Requirements
19 | Big Game - Hunting on Highway
19 | Hunt within 660 Feet of Dwelling/Livestock
19 | Small Game - Right of Way Restriction
17 | License - Apply/Purchase Big Game When Ineligible
16 | Small Game - No License
16 | Small Game - Over Limit
16 | Waterfowl - Unlawful Possession
14 | Big Game - No License
13 | Small Game - Wrong Unit
12 | Waterfowl - No License
11 | Small Game - Hunt Before/After Legal Hours
8 | Big Game - Failure to Tag
8 | Waterfowl - Closed Season
7 | Big Game - Improper Tagging
7 | Big Game - Use of Salt Lick to Attract
7 | Big Game - Violate Conditions of License
7 | Gun Protruding from Vehicle
7 | Hunting Game Birds with Unlawful Firearm
7 | License - No Migratory Bird Certification
7 | Minor Hunting without Adult Supervision
7 | Waterfowl - Transportation/Packaging Requirements
5 | Big Game - Bait Station/Electronic Call Prohibited
5 | Waterfowl - Shooting from a Motor Vehicle
5 | Small Game - Closed Season
5 | Waterfowl - Overlimit
4 | Artificial Light Prohibited After 10 p.m.
4 | Big Game - Transport Without Sex/Species ID
4 | Disturbing Wildlife Prohibited
4 | Hunt Within 660 Feet of Dwelling/Livestock - Posted
4 | Hunting Doves from Road Right-of-Way Prohibited
4 | Hunting Within a Federal Refuge, Park, or Monument
4 | Hunting within a State Game Bird Refuge
5 | License - Lending
4 | Shooting From a Motor Vehicle (Deer)
4 | Furbearer - Unlawful Possession
4 | Use of Vehicle/Boat to Disturb or Chase
4 | Waterfowl - Hunt Before/After Legal Hours
4 | Waterfowl - Lead Shot
4 | Waterfowl - Right of Way Restriction
3 | Endangerment Other While Hunting on Right of Way
3 | Interference with Lawful Hunting
3 | Shooting Preserve - Failure to Tag Birds

2 | Hunting from Aircraft
2 | Small Game - Violate Conditions of License
2 | Turkey - No License
2 | Unprotected Game - No License
1 | Big Game - No Fluorescent Orange
1 | Big Game - Transport without Tag (Taken Outside SD/
Tribal)
1 | Hunting Guide Activities Barred From Certain State Lands
1 | Illegal Hunting Method
1 | Shooting Preserve - Insufficient Release
1 | Small Game - Unplugged Shotgun

MISC VIOLATIONS = 732

145 | Drugs - Use or Possession of Paraphernalia
101 | Alcohol - Possession by Minor
74 | Trespass - Hunting (Unknowing)
54 | Drugs - Possession of Controlled Substance
47 | Driving Under the Influence - Misdemeanor
43 | Alcohol - Open Container
32 | Drugs - Possession of Marijuana - 2 Ounces or Less
19 | License - Minimum Residency Required
19 | Trespass - Hunting (Knowing)
18 | License - Not in Possession
15 | Drugs - Ingest Intoxicant Other Than Alcohol
15 | Drugs - Ingestion of a Controlled Substance
12 | Wanton Waste of Game
12 | Obstructing Law Enforcement Officer
10 | License - Fraud to Obtain
10 | Traffic - Reckless Driving
6 | Aggravated Assault Against Law Enforcement
5 | Driving Under Influence - Under Age 21
5 | Driving Under Influence - Felony
5 | Motor Vehicle - Driver Use of Marijuana
5 | Disorderly Conduct
5 | Motor Vehicle - Passenger Use of Marijuana
5 | Resisting Arrest
4 | Drugs - Possession, Sale, or Distribution for Intoxication
4 | Habitual Offender - Prior Felony
4 | Impersonation to Deceive Officer
4 | Manufacture, Distribute, or Possess Controlled Substance
4 | Trespass - Criminal
3 | Drugs - Inhabiting Room Where Controlled Substances
Illegal
3 | Drugs - Keeping Place for Use or Sale of Substances
3 | Drugs - Possession of Marijuana - More than 2 Ounces
3 | Drugs - Possession with Intent to Distribute Marijuana
3 | Enter Boundary Water without SD License
3 | Simple Assault Against Law Enforcement
3 | Trespass - Fishing (Unknowing)
2 | Aggravated Eluding
2 | Commit Felony Carrying Firearm - First Conviction
2 | Driving Under Revocation
2 | Habitual Offender - 3+ Felonies
2 | Grand Theft

- 2 | Prostitution - Misdemeanor
- 2 | Solicitation of a Minor - Felony
- 2 | Taxidermy - Failure to Allow Inspection
- 1 | Eluding
- 1 | Escape - 1st Degree
- 1 | Fugitive from Justice
- 1 | License - Failure to Exhibit License/ID on Private Land
- 1 | No Valid Drivers License
- 1 | Promoting Prostitution - Felony
- 1 | Possession of a Firearm - Convicted Drug Felon
- 1 | Possession of a Firearm - Convicted Violent Felon
- 1 | Reckless Discharge of a Firearm/Bow
- 1 | Restrictions on Use of Firearms
- 1 | Traffic - Careless Driving
- 1 | Trespass - Trapping (Unknowing)
- 1 | Violation of Protection Order

FISHING VIOLATIONS = 349

- 220 | Fishing without License
- 33 | Too Many Lines
- 26 | Over Limit of Fish
- 25 | Length Limit Violation
- 13 | Unattended Lines
 - 9 | Illegal Transport and Storage of Fish
 - 9 | Unlawful Possession - Fish
- 3 | Aquatic Invasive Species - Illegal Possession/Transport
- 3 | License - Fish Under Revocation
- 2 | Aquatic Invasive Species - Fish and Bait Transportation Restrictions
- 2 | Wanton Waste of Fish
- 1 | Highgrading of Fish Prohibited
- 1 | Illegal Fishing Method
- 1 | Prohibited Bait
- 1 | Waters Open to Taking of Bait

PARK AND PUBLIC LAND

VIOLATIONS = 186

- 41 | Driving Off Roads Prohibited
- 31 | Traffic - Speeding in Park/Recreation Area
- 11 | Unauthorized Land Use on Posted Park Lands
- 11 | Littering Prohibited
- 10 | Alcohol - Possession Prohibited in Certain Areas
- 10 | Failure to Have Park Entrance License
- 9 | Limitation on Tree Stands/Platforms/Blinds
- 7 | Snowmobile - No Valid License
- 6 | Misc. Park Violations
- 5 | Fireworks - Sell/Discharge
- 5 | Glass Containers Prohibited
- 5 | Pet Prohibitions
- 5 | Traffic - Operate/Park Vehicle in Violation of Posted Sign
- 4 | Use of Snowmobile Trail Restricted
- 3 | Bait Station Prohibited on Department Land
- 2 | Destruction or Removal of Natural Features
- 2 | Lead Shot Target Shooting on Public Lands

- 2 | Leaving Property on Department Land
- 2 | Limitation on Trail Cameras
- 2 | Littering from Vehicle
- 2 | Unauthorized Fire/Public Land
- 2 | Unauthorized Land Use/Entry on Posted Land
- 1 | Failure to Obey Traffic Signs in Park/Recreation Area
- 1 | Hang Gliding Prohibited
- 1 | No Camping Permit
- 1 | Operating Motor Vehicle on Mickelson Trail
- 1 | Operating Vehicles on School and Public Land
- 1 | Parking in No Parking Zones Prohibited
- 1 | Placing Residential Trash at GFP Trash Facilities
- 1 | Start Open Fire in Black Hills
- 1 | Throw Match or Burning Object from Vehicle

FURBEARER VIOLATIONS = 9

- 3 | Furbearer - No License
- 2 | Trap Checking Required
- 1 | Body Grip Trap Restrictions
- 1 | Possession of Unchecked Raw Fur
- 1 | Snare Restrictions
- 1 | Trap Furbearer During Closed Season (Bobcat)

WATERCRAFT VIOLATIONS = 490

- 172 | PFD - Insufficient Number
- 122 | Aquatic Invasive Species - Conveyance Removal Restrictions
- 70 | Operate Vessel Under Influence
- 18 | Operate Vessel Without License/Number
- 17 | Operate Vessel Without Lights
- 14 | Careless Operation
- 14 | Operate Vessel in Violation of Posted Waters
- 12 | PFD - Not Wearing on Personal Watercraft
- 12 | Reckless/Negligent Operation of Vessel
- 7 | Aquatic Invasive Species - Failure to Comply with Inspection
- 4 | PFD - Use Required (Child Under 7)
- 4 | PWC - Greater Than No Wake Within 150 Feet
- 4 | Water Skiing - No Observer or Mirror
- 3 | Aquatic Invasive Species - Conveyance Placement Restrictions
- 3 | PFD - No Throwable
- 3 | PWC - Operate Without Lights
- 2 | No Fire Extinguisher
- 2 | PWC - Underage Operation
- 1 | Boat Accident - Failure to Report
- 1 | Improper Display of Boat Numbers
- 1 | Misc. Other Boat Safety Equipment
- 1 | Navigation Rules
- 1 | No Diver Down Flag
- 1 | Overloading Boat

PFD = Personal Floatation Device
PWC = Personal Watercraft

2023 STATEWIDE VIOLATION STATISTICS

VIOLATION TOTALS BY ACTIVITY

Hunting	759
Miscellaneous	732
Fishing	349
Watercraft	490
Parks and Public Land	186
Furbearer	9
TOTAL	2,525

WRITTEN WARNINGS BY ACTIVITY

Boating	711
Hunting	472
Miscellaneous	256
Parks	228
Fishing	211
Taxidermist	2
Trapping - Furbearer	1
TOTAL	1,881

SUSPENSIONS

Hunting	256
Fishing	206
Trapping	5
TOTAL	467

FINES AND COSTS

Fines assessed	\$188,234
Fines suspended	\$23
Actual fines assessed	\$188,211
Costs assessed	\$139,354
Costs suspended	\$0
Actual costs assessed	\$139,354
ACTUAL FINES & COSTS ASSESSED	\$327,565

JAIL TIME - DAYS

Jail time assessed	33,100
Jail time suspended	30,149
ACTUAL JAIL TIME SERVED	2,951

PROBATION - MONTHS

Probation	382
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CIVIL DAMAGES ASSESSED

Big Game	\$46,400
Fish	\$1,800
Furbearer	\$0
Small Game/Waterfowl	\$20,400
TOTAL	\$68,600



2023 STATEWIDE CONTACT STATISTICS

FIELD CONTACT TOTALS

Anglers – nonresident	7,265
Anglers – resident	15,871
Hunters – nonresident	5,271
Hunters – resident	8,969
Parks	19,256
Misc	789
Trappers – nonresident	0
Trappers – resident	88
TOTAL	57,509

LAW ENFORCEMENT EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

Radio	260
Presentations to groups	132
School programs	145
HuntSAFE classes	143
Newspaper articles	32
TV	2
TOTAL	714

LANDOWNER ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE

Trespass	180
Shooting too close to dwellings/ livestock (660 feet)	78
Spotlighting	62
Miscellaneous	149
TOTAL	469

INSPECTION TOTALS

Watercraft	7,640
Snowmobile	1,495
Private Shooting Preserve	271
Taxidermist	86
Bait Dealers	30
Fur Dealers	8
Private Fish Hatchery	6
Captive Game Bird	4
Public Storage	0
TOTAL	9,540



CONSERVATION OFFICER AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Every year GFP conservation officers, supervisors, and administrative staff receive awards in recognition of their efforts toward wildlife law enforcement and management.

2023 SOUTH DAKOTA CONSERVATION OFFICER OF THE YEAR



Each year, Shikar-Safari Club International selects an outstanding Conservation Officer in each of the 50 states based on their exemplary performance in the areas of wildlife protection, wildlife law enforcement, and implementation of important wildlife conservation programs.

South Dakota's 2023 Recipient is Clark Conservation Officer Zach Thomsen.

Zach was recognized for his outstanding community involvement, his dedication to the protection of South Dakota's natural resources and his commitment to carrying out the mission of South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks.



MATT TALBERT

District Conservation Officer Supervisor in Salem, received the Officer of the Year Award from the Midwest Association of Fish and Game Law Enforcement Officers for his outstanding efforts in law enforcement.



LYNN GEUKE

Conservation Officer in Plankinton, received the Officer of the Year Award from the South Dakota Conservation Officers Association for his outstanding efforts.



KYLE LENZNER

Conservation Officer in Watertown, received the Officer of the Year Award from the National Wild Turkey Federation for his efforts in connecting youth with the outdoors and support of conservation efforts.



BLAKE SWANSON

Conservation Officer in Milbank, received the Brook Brown Boating Safety Officer of the Year Award from the National Association of Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) for his efforts with boating safety.

