LANDOWNERS MATTER

NEWSLETTER



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

SAM SCHELHAAS | LAW ENFORCEMENT SECTION CHIEF

SAFETY ZONES

The 2025 Legislative Session has wrapped up and that marks the 100th year of this legislative process taking place in the state of South Dakota. Past records indicate that the first game and fish laws date back to January of 1875, and I can only imagine that there have been discussions about hunting and fishing every year since! This year was no different.

One of the topics that brought forth a lot of healthy discussion was a bill about expanding safety zones for road hunting. There were many opinions shared on both sides of this discussion, and ultimately no changes were passed by the Legislative body. As we listened to those discussions it became clear to us that we need to emphasize meeting with and working with the rural homeowners that are having issues with road hunters.

Road hunting for pheasants, when done correctly, is a great way for many to get outside and enjoy some pheasant hunting. Unfortunately, when road hunting for pheasants is not done correctly it can be unsafe, unethical, and can cast a bad light on hunters as a whole. Our goal at GFP is to work with landowners and producers to make sure we address their issues and concerns. We don't want anyone to feel unsafe while they are out in their yards, working in their shops, or harvesting their fields. We want to make sure that if there is someone out there that has concerns that we can visit with them and make sure they know what is expected of our hunters.

We are more than willing to help place safety zone signs, which the Department provides for free, in the correct location to make sure livestock and houses are protected. The Landowners Matter Newsletter includes the names, locations, and phone numbers of every conservation officer in the state. I encourage landowners and producers to call the conservation officer closest to you if there are questions or concerns regarding road hunting.

We will stop in and visit, review the laws, and provide some ideas and tips on how we can work together to catch those who choose to disregard the laws of our state. We will also share what information is important to us when someone is observed breaking the law and make sure the landowner understands the multiple ways that information can be relayed to our conservation officers. Again, our goal is to work with landowners and producers to address any concerns they may have regarding this topic, or any other topic. Please give us a call!

OTHER UPDATES

There we several other topics discussed throughout this year's Legislative Session. One noteworthy change that came from Session, would be a bill brought by the Department regarding mentor hunting. Senate Bill 41 clarified the minimum age for a hunting license, allowing youth under the age of 16 be eligible to be issued a mentor hunting license. This will streamline our mentor hunting program, and we look forward to implementing these changes for the coming season.

Senate Bill 78 was introduced by Senator Kevin Jensen and amended the caliber restrictions in regard to night hunting. The change moved the maximum allowable rifle from below a .225 caliber to below a .312 caliber. Night hunting has grown in popularity over the last several years and there are some excellent rifle options available for predator hunters, specifically the .300 Blackout. This change now makes it legal to use a rifle, such as the .300 Blackout, for predator hunting at night.

The Department was also involved in Senate Bill 46, which clarified where boat registration revenue is allocated, and Senate Bill 8, which strengthened the laws regarding boating under the influence.

This was overall a busy Legislative Session for GFP, and we are proud to make sure our outdoor opportunities continue to remain strong, and as discussed above enhanced for hunters, anglers, campers, and visitors across the state!



CONTROLLED HUNTING ACCESS PROGRAM A WIN-WIN FOR LANDOWNERS AND HUNTERS

ALEX ELIAS | PRIVATE LANDS HABITAT BIOLOGIST

A new hunting opportunity for pheasant hunters is now available near Plankinton, South Dakota due to an agreement between the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) and Grand Ciel Lodge pheasant hunting lodge. Grand Ciel is taking the first steps in converting row crop agricultural land into Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres using cover crops and native grass plantings and would like to share the hunting opportunity in those grasslands with hunters.

Grand Ciel Lodge has recently signed up into the Controlled Hunting Access Program (CHAP). CHAP is a program that pays landowners to allow hunting access. The landowner can decide which parameters are includedyet still allowing the landowner tohave some additional levels of control versus properties enrolled in the standard Walk In Area Program. These parameters range from which species are allowed to be hunted, how many people can hunt per day, and what weapon can be used. In Grand Ciel lodge's case they are allowing access to a 30-acre parcel of brand new CRP for the next 5 years hunting opportunity through the entire pheasant season, including youth and resident openers. The parameters that are placed on this property are:

- 1. No more than 1 group (up to 5 hunters) can hunt per day
- 2. Pheasant is the only species allowed to be taken
- 3. A group of hunters can not register for more than 2 days in a row
- 4. Hunters must register online, print out registration slip at home and then deposit it at on-site check point before hunting.

GFP has CHAPs throughout the state. If you are looking for a place to hunt next fall, check out one of the CHAPs in your area! Make sure you look at the parameters that apply to each property. If you are a landowner, please check out our CHAP program and see if it could fit into your operation. Your local conservation officer or private lands habitat biologist can help answer questions and identify the approach to meet your objectives.



TESTIMONIES FROM THE FIELD

"The more land that's available for hunters to access the better. We wanted to change the narrative that lodges just lease up all the good hunting land and wanted to give back to hunters with this program. Being able to have control or limit the number of people that hunt per day makes the spot good through the whole season. One of the main reasons for going into the CHAP program was hunter recruitment. We felt like it was an opportunity to give back to the sportsmen and women."

- Corey, Grand Ciel Lodge

"When looking for spots to hunt on CHAP areas there is no competition to get there before everyone else. we know we have a spot to hunt and have a good opportunity for birds. We harvested and flushed birds at this spot and it was a great time. We will use it again when we come next year!"

- Micheal Boyd, a pheasant hunter from Georgia, who was hunting the CHAP, and asked what hunters like him enjoy about the CHAP opportunities

WOODY HABITAT Scenarios

ERIC MAGEDANZ | SENIOR WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST

Thinking of planting trees but not sure where to place them? South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks' Woody Habitat Program provides landowners with a multitude of options to establish woody cover. Oftentimes, it can be challenging to determine the prime location to maximize its values or just simply where woody cover planting opportunities exists on a landowner's property. The following are just few thoughtprovoking common scenarios that could apply on your land.



FISH MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS FOR WATERS ON PRIVATE LAND

JASON JUNGWIRTH | SENIOR BIOLOGIST - AQUATIC HABITAT AND ACCESS

Waters on private land provide excellent fishing opportunities. Many landowners have questions on the how to of fisheries management and are looking for assistance in managing their waters to provide a quality fishery. South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) has a program designed to help willing landowners with their pond management through the Fisheries Management Agreement (FMA) program.

The FMA program is somewhat like the Walk-In-Area program that landowners sign up to allow for public hunting access on private land. To participate in the FMA program, a landowner must be willing to open



their pond for public access, meaning that permission would not have to be obtained prior to accessing the fishery. After signing up for the program, GFP staff may assist with a wide range of fish management activities to help establish and maintain the fishery moving forward. These agreements are generally good for 10 years and may or may not have a financial compensation component. Ponds signed up in the FMA program are included in the GFP's online access map, which allows the public to more easily find the FMA's. The pond will also display adequate signage to help ensure anglers correctly find the fisheries. Management activities associated with FMA's generally comes in the form of stocking fish, but GFP staff may also take a more active role in managing these ponds, like any other public fishery across the state from fish stocking to monitoring the fishery through surveys. GFP staff will also work with the landowner to provide the type of fishery that is desired, within the constraints of what the water can support. Here is a list of the fisheries options offered:

- » LARGEMOUTH BASS ONLY OPTION: bass are the only sportfish in the pond
- » ALL-PURPOSE OPTION: a variety of sizes and species to catch
- » PANFISH OPTION: goal is to produce large panfish through high numbers of small bass
- » BIG BASS OPTION: goal is to produce large bass through high numbers of panfish
- » CHANNEL CATFISH ONLY OPTION: catfish are the only sportfish in the pond
- » TROUT POND MANAGEMENT: if conditions are Walleye and muskellunge will not be provided

In many cases, FMA's can be important fisheries for the general public. This is particularly true in areas where limited fisheries options are available, such as western South Dakota. Due to this, the FMA program can be a great way for landowners to obtain assistance in managing ponds on private land as fisheries and provide additional angling opportunities for the public.

If you have water on your land that you think will provide a quality fishing experience for the public and are interested in entering into a Fisheries Management Agreement, please contact your local Aquatic Habitat and Access Biologist listed on page 14, or go to the GFP website at *gfp.sd.gov/forms/fishmanagement/*.

NEW WILDLIFE DAMAGE

MANAGEMENT HUB

JIM NOBLE | GIS PROGRAM SPECIALIST

X Te all know that winters in South Dakota can vary from year to year. From a severe winter like 2022-2023 to a mild winter like this year. Extreme weather events can result in significant damage to stored feed caused by big game across the state as elk, deer, and turkey group together foraging for food. Game, Fish and Parks has been improving their systems to manage requests for service that come in from producers looking for assistance with depredation. Recently, a new Wildlife Damage Management Hub was created to assist wildlife damage specialists to collect, manage, and organize producers' requests for services. This system already has been utilized since 2022 for Canada goose crop damage in eastern South Dakota and it has greatly improved staff efficiency and response time to producers. Other wildlife species have now been added to the system!

The Wildlife Damage Management Hub experience begins when a producer visits the GFP Forms & Permits page on the website, then navigating to Wildlife Damage Request for Service and filling out a request for service form. Producers can complete a request for service form using a cell phone or a computer at any time or any place. In addition to Canada geese, the Wildlife Damage Management Hub now includes request for service forms for big game animals, aquatic furbearers like beaver, muskrat, and river otter, and other wildlife such as birds of prey and prairie dogs. The forms consist of basic contact information, damage location, wildlife species, and spot for the producer to provide notes or other helpful information. Once a producer submits a form, GFP staff will view and manage each request and respond accordingly. A cell phone app and a series of web apps enable wildlife damage specialists to track and manage producer requests. The Wildlife Damage Management Hub also monitors the location and quantity of wildlife damage



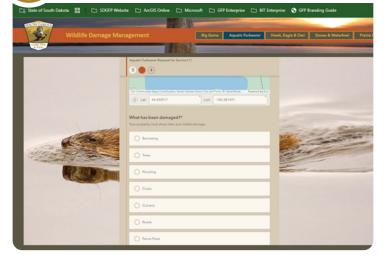
management tools and equipment in the field. This will enhance our ability to deliver and monitor equipment in the field while improving general asset management and response time.

Technology is great! It is helping South Dakota producers and GFP accomplish incredible tasks with limited resources, but technology isn't always easy. It often presents new challenges. Producers can always call their local wildlife damage specialist or GFP office for assistance with wildlife damage service requests. GFP professionals can enter a request for service into the Wildlife Damage Management Hub on behalf of the producer. More tech-savvy individuals will find the request for service forms natural to complete. Please follow the QR code below to watch a briefhow-to video so you can start using the Wildlife Damage Management Hub. The Wildlife Damage Management Hub aims to provide the infrastructure to handle high-volume producer damage requests. From severe winters and springtime planting to harvest season, the Wildlife Management Hub is a 24/7 online access point for producers.

BIG GAME REQUEST FOR SERVICE



2. AQUATIC FURBEARER REQUEST FOR SERVICE FORM





SCAN TO WATCH A HOW-TO VIDEO



SOUTH DAKOTA GAME, FISH AND PARKS PRIVATE LANDS HABITAT PROGRAM

The goal of GFP's Private Lands Habitat Program is to help landowners establish, restore, or manage habitat on private land to enhance reproduction, recruitment, and survival of wildlife. Several program options are available to support management practices that emphasize healthy working grasslands. All projects are subject to approval by a GFP private lands habitat biologist. Cooperators must allow some amount of reasonable public hunting.

FOOD PLOTS

- » Food plots must remain unharvested/standing through March 15.
- » Annual payment of \$20 per acre for food plot acres (\$80/acre for food plots enrolled in a public hunting access program).
- » Free food plot seed is available from GFP each spring (corn, sorghum, brood mix, big game mix).
- » Maximum of 20 acres per quarter section and unlimited total acres per landowner.

WOODY HABITAT

- » Shelterbelt plantings
- » Shelterbelt renovations
- » Riparian shrub clump plantings
- » Hardwood release program

GRASSLAND ESTABLISHMENT

- » Native grass and forb seed mixes are the priority and plantings must be at least 10 acres.
- » Landowners are reimbursed 100 percent up to a maximum of \$125/acre for seed costs.
- » Cost-share is NOT available on CRP or WRP plantings or hay land.
- » Additional incentives available if plantings are enrolled into public hunting access program.

BROOD/POLLINATOR PLOTS

- » Designed to provide high-quality, native perennial habitat for broods and pollinators.
- » Landowners are reimbursed 100 percent up to a maximum of \$150/acre for seed costs.
- » Individual plantings must be a minimum of 2 acres and a maximum of 9 acres.

GRASSLAND/GRAZING MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- » To enhance grazing management opportunities and plant community health on working grasslands
- » Cost-shared practices include:
 - Perimeter and cross fence
 - Woven-wire fence replacement in pronghorn range (wildlife friendly fence design)
 - Water development stock tanks, pipeline, rural water hook-ups, wells, solar pump units
 - Multi-purpose stock/wildlife impoundments
 - Wetland restorations
 - Grassland establishment
 - Riparian pastures
 - Habitat exclusion fencing

RIPARIAN HABITAT ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

- » One-time rental payment of 75 percent per year of the county NASS rate for pasture (10-year contract).
- » Cost share livestock exclusion and alternative water sources.
- » Minimum width 35 feet and maximum width of 240 feet.

Learn more: habitat.sd.gov

CONTACT A GFP PRIVATE LANDS HABITAT BIOLOGIST

ABERDEEN Tom Mitzel | 605.626.3341

BELLE FOURCHE Michael Peyton | 605.391.1575

BROOKINGS Will Gallman | 704.689.9091

CHAMBERLAIN Jessica Thiry | 605.682.8476

CUSTER Tom Miklos | 605.416.4080

FORT PIERRE John Mayrose | 605.222.0867

HOT SPRINGS Ben Pucket | 605.786.8144

MITCHELL Alex Elias | 605.350.1725

MOBRIDGE Kody Conlon | 605.848.0980

TYNDALL Todd Crownover | 605.464.0647

WATERTOWN Dan Nelson | 605.303.4805

WEBSTER Calvin Meyer | 605.265.3510





SOUTH DAKOTA GAME, FISH AND PARKS

PRIVATE LAND HUNTING ACCESS PROGRAMS

WALK-IN AREA PROGRAM (WIA)

Leases hunting rights on private land for unlimited public foot traffic hunting. Annual payments range from less than a \$1 to \$13/acre depending on size, location in the state, habitat condition, and hunting opportunities. Muti-year contracts are eligible for signing bonuses if they provide priority big game hunting opportunity or access to habitat that isn't hayed or grazed in most years. Signing bonuses are \$5 or \$10 per acre per year the land is enrolled depending on your location.

CONTROLLED HUNTING ACCESS PROGRAM (CHAP)

Leases public hunting rights on private land according to the limits the landowners sets. Limits may include the number of hunters per day, the type of game that can be hunted, the type of take (ex. Archery only), and the dates that it is open to hunting. Landowners manage hunter access via direct contact, self-service check-in box, or through an online reservation system on the GFP website. Annual payment is equal to a base payment of \$500 plus \$20/hunter that hunts the property. Multi-year contracts are eligible for a signing bonus based on the hunting opportunity that is provided. New contracts are eligible for \$1,000/year signing bonus for up to a 5 year contract.

CO-OP WIA HUNTING ACCESS

Leases same hunting rights as a Walk-in Area, but also allows hunters to drive on harvested cropland to place and retrieve waterfowl decoys and allows disabled hunter permit holders to drive on harvested cropland and hunt from their vehicle. No hunting is allowed while farm machinery is working in the field. Annual payments range from \$1.25 to \$3/acre depending on if driving is restricted to ATV/UTVs and the amount of habitat that isn't hayed or grazed in most years. Multi-year contracts are eligible for a signing bonus of half the annual payment times the number of years in the contract.



State statutes (SDCL 20-9-12 through SDCL 20-9-18) protect landowners who enroll in these programs from certain liability.

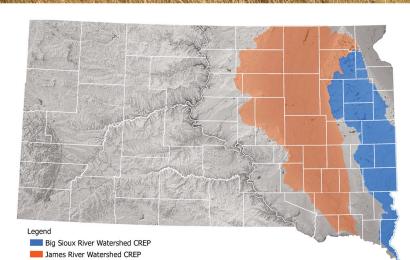
Find contact information for your local Private Lands Habitat Biologist on page 14 to learn more about these programs.

ENROLL YOUR LAND IN THE CONSERVATION RESERVE ENHANCEMENT

PROGRAM TODAY!

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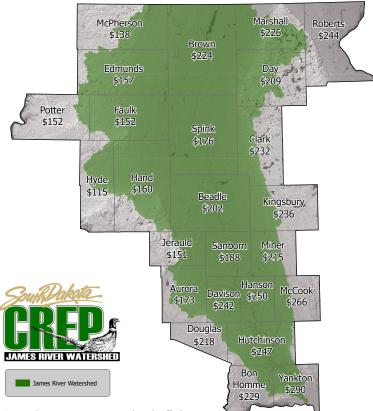




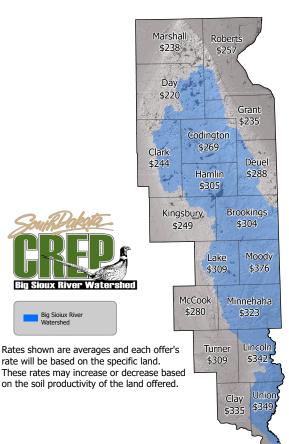


Create wildlife habitat, improve water quality, increase livestock forage resources, and provide public hunting and fishing access on your land through enrollment in CREP in the Big Sioux River Watershed or the James River Watershed. Participants receive additional annual rental payments from GFP on top of the annual CRP rental payments. Contact a GFP Private Lands Habitat Biologist to learn more.

CREP County Average Rental Rate/Acre Total of Federal CRP and SDGFP CREP Payments



Rates shown are averages and each offer's rate will be based on the specific land. These rates may increase or decrease based on the soil productivity of the land offered.



WILDLIFE FRIENDLY FENCING

TOM MIKLOS | WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST

cross the Western South Dakota landscape and a portion East of the Missouri River you can find pronghorn antelope. These animals travel far and wide across our open landscape. One limiting factor of pronghorn movement is woven wire fences. These fences are common for domestic sheep production. Woven wire can hinder the movement of antelope and other species and may have an impact on their populations. We see antelope migrate in large numbers during winter months, sometimes traveling over 40 miles to find prime forage sources. It's during the winter months when fences can become covered with snow drifts. After spring melt, antelope may have a difficult time returning to summer ranges if they encounter woven wire fences. South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks (GFP) offers a cost share program to help producers remove unwanted woven wire in replacement for wildlife friendly fence. Wildlife friendly fence has a 16 to 18-inch ground spacing making it easier for antelope to get under. This allows antelope to travel easier across the landscape, helps them escape from predators and even vehicles along roadways. Wildlife Friendly Fence can also have a positive impact on range conditions. With better distribution of wildlife, forage conditions may improve. Currently GFP offers a cost share rate up to \$0.95 per foot for woven wire removal and replacement with wildlife friendly fence. Five or more stands of barbed wire also qualifies for this program. Last year, GFP helped producers replace over 60 miles of woven wire fence. Mule deer and whitetail deer also benefit from wildlife friendly fences. Please contact a GFP Private Lands Biologists for more details.



MANAGING ELK

on the Prairies of South Dakota

MIKE KLOSOWSKI | REGIONAL WILDLIFE SUPERVISOR, RAPID CITY

For years, elk have roamed the prairies of South Dakota and beyond, living a nomadic lifestyle—here today, gone tomorrow. Around the turn of the century, elk were extirpated from most of South Dakota. In many cases, they were viewed as either a food source or as competition with cattle on lands converted for agriculture and livestock.

In recent years, however, elk have begun to repopulate the prairies, making it clear that they intend to make a significant comeback. That sounds like good news, right? Well—yes and no.

How do we move forward while maintaining existing land use and agricultural practices? How can we ensure that farmers and ranchers have the tools readily available to deal with the depredation issues that elk will inevitably cause? How do we provide the public with meaningful hunting opportunities? And how can we collaborate with tribal members and authorities who share jurisdiction over reservation lands?

Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) staff have been discussing these complex questions internally and with stakeholders for several years, knowing that time is of the essence. It is well known that elk populations are increasing on the prairie and will eventually pose significant and costly issues for producers in areas that previously had little or no elk presence.

Bennett County has long supported huntable populations of elk, providing opportunities for both landowners and the general public. Alongside those opportunities, however, come considerable challenges—elk routinely damage stored feed supplies and newly planted crops like corn and alfalfa. In Bennett County alone, GFP staff assist 20 to 30 producers annually. Tools offered to help producers include stackyards, cable fencing, and elk food plot contracts.

These issues are not only costly for producers but also for GFP and hunting license buyers, as the depredation programs are funded through license revenue. In fiscal year 2024, GFP spent approximately \$485,000 on elk depredation programs across western South Dakota. Landowners have expressed growing concern over the expanding elk population. In response, GFP staff have been engaging with producers to gather input on strategies that could be implemented to help address elk-related challenges. While many good ideas and suggestions have emerged, it's clear that this is a complex issue that will require a variety of tools and approaches.

As a result of feedback from both landowners and GFP staff, the Game, Fish and Parks Commission took several key steps at their April 2025 meeting in Pierre to better support affected landowners. One of the major actions taken was the expansion of the Prairie Elk Unit, known as the West River Area (WRA). The Commission approved rule changes to include deeded private property within several reservation counties in the Prairie WRA elk unit. These counties include Oglala Lakota, Todd, Dewey, Ziebach, Corson, south Jackson, and Lyman. This change allows both landowners and hunters-with valid WRA elk licenses and landowner permission-to hunt elk in areas that were previously closed to state-licensed elk hunting. It's important to note that all state-issued elk licenses are not valid on tribal lands. Tribes in South Dakota manage their own wildlife seasons and should be contacted directly for guidance. Another significant change is that landowners within the newly expanded Prairie WRA elk unit who own at least 240 acres and have not already received an elk license may now obtain a half-priced, landowner-only cow elk license. This license is valid only on land the individual owns and/or operates for agricultural purposes.

These changes are important steps toward helping producers manage elk depredation on their property while also expanding hunting opportunities for the public. Hunting remains a cherished tradition in South Dakota, and GFP is committed to increasing access and opportunity whenever possible.

As this new management tool is implemented, landowners are encouraged to remain aware of the growing prairie elk population and play a key role in maintaining elk numbers at lower levels to minimize depredation and conflict. GFP stands ready to assist landowners facing elk-related issues—not only



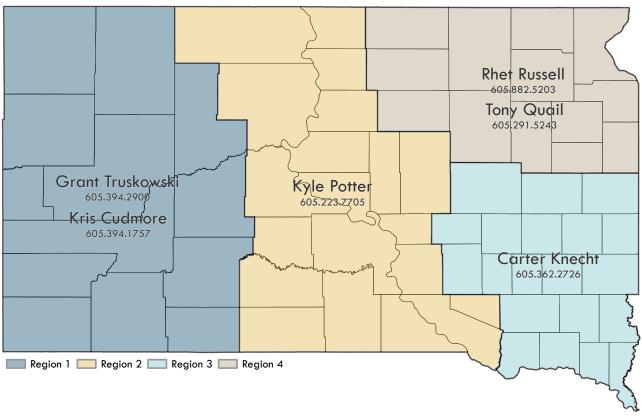
through depredation programs, but also by offering incentives for public hunting access on private land. It is well established that one of the most effective ways to reduce elk damage is to allow access for hunters to harvest elk.

Prairie Elk seasons had 35,000 acres enlisted in 2024. Producers who would like to learn more about elk hunting access programs or discuss options for addressing elk depredation are encouraged to contact the Rapid City Regional Wildlife Office at (605) 394-2391 or the Chamberlain regional Office at (605) 734-4530 or start the discussion with your local conservation officer.

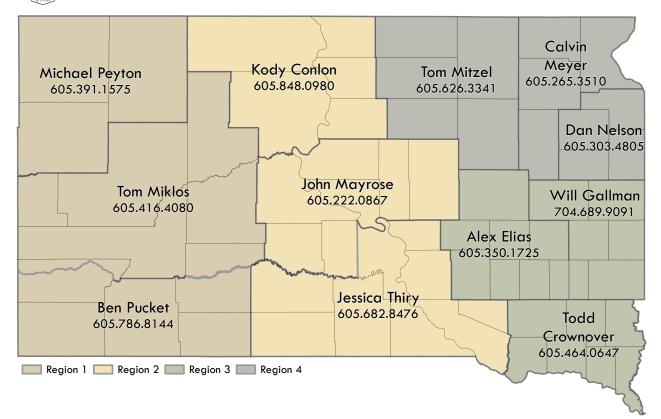




Aquatic Habitat and Access Biologists



⁷ Private Lands Habitat and Access Biologists



NEW EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

NEW PRIVATE LANDS HABITAT BIOLOGIST



NAME: Calvin Meyer

CONTACT INFO: Cell Phone - 605.265.3510

Email - calvin.meyer@state.sd.us

COVERAGE AREA: Roberts, Marshall, Day, and Clark counties

FUN FACT: When not out in

the field, Calvin enjoys exploring the properties of plants and how they can benefit both people and wildlife. You might find him working in his own pollinator planting or working on some part of his hobby farm, always eager to learn more about the landscape's natural offerings. The passion for the outdoors extends to hands-on work with plants, whether it's growing them or discovering new ways to support the environment through their uses.

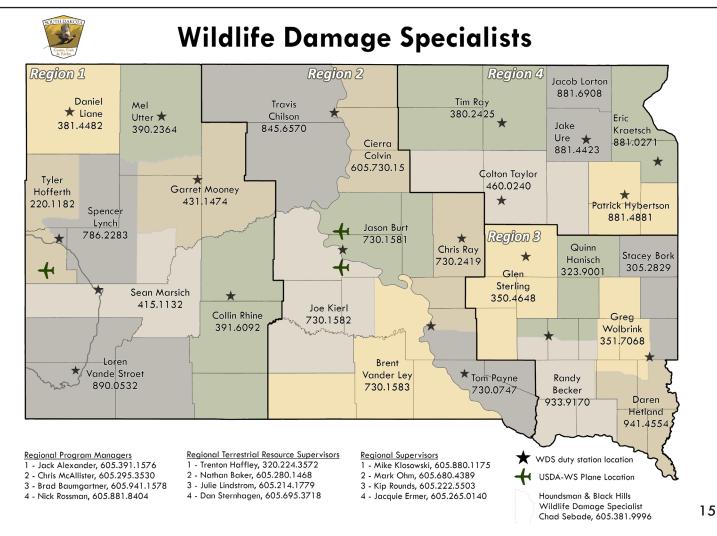
NEW WILDLIFE DAMAGE SPECIALIST



NAME: Cierra Colvin CONTACT INFO: Cell Phone - 605.730.1579 COVERAGE AREA: Campbell, Walworth, and Potter counties

FUN FACT: In her spare time Cierra enjoys working with and

riding horses, spending time with her Shepard/ Malinois cross dog "Amos" and gardening, but she states trapping is probably her greatest enjoyment in life. She's also a third generation trapper!



LANDOWNERS MATTER

GAME, FISH AND PARKS | 523 EAST CAPITOL AVE | PIERRE, SD 57501 | 605.773.3718



TO MAKE CHANGES TO YOUR ADDRESS FOR THIS PUBLICATION, PLEASE EMAIL ALLIE.ELLINGSON@STATE.SD.US

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks serves and connects people and families to the outdoors through effective management of our state's parks, fisheries, and wildlife resources.

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Pierre	Jason Hamil	605.280.7619
Plankinton	Lynn Geuke	605.220.6943
Platte	Eric Brumbaugh	605.295.1966
Presho	Wyatt Weber	605.222.4192
Rapid City	Chris Dekker	605.390.0923
	Ross Fees	605.381.3734
	Adam Geigle (District CO Supervisor)	605.390.1230 605.381.9500
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nounoita		605.460.0450
Salem	Alex Osborne Matt Talbert (District CO Supervisor)	605.220.1169 605.360.0491
Sioux Falls	Craig Fishel	605.201.3001
01000 1 0113	Justin Harman	605.530.7085
	Jared Hill	605.941.0181
	Jeremy Rakowicz (District CO Supervisor)	605.941.0074
	Jeremy Roe (Regional CO Supervisor)	605.940.3519
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Wall	Derek Pelton	605.220.9688
Watertown	Kyle Lenzner	605.881.3777
	Jackson Knight	605.280.1545
	Kraig Haase (Regional CO Supervisor)	605.881.3774
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