

OUTDOOR CAMPUS SIOUX FALLS

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



HELLO FROM SIOUX FALLS!

This past year marked a season of change for the Game, Fish and Parks Outdoor Campus Sioux Falls. Construction on the outdoor archery range was completed in 2024, and preparation on the indoor portion of the expansion began in early 2025.

Another big change this year was the switch to a new registration system. The South Dakota Go Outdoors system allows for a “One-stop Shop” for all Game, Fish and Parks customers. Not only can you register for classes, but you can purchase a hunting or fishing license or make a camping reservation. This transition puts all department classes in one location. Customers can now register for Outdoor Campus classes and State Park classes in the same place. All Department events whether they require registration or are “open house,” can be found on this singular calendar.

Though we have gone through some big changes this past year, many areas will remain the same:

1. We will never change our commitment to offer quality, FREE outdoor education programming that focuses on connecting the public with the great outdoors of South Dakota.
2. We will never change our focus on providing a great environment for interns and volunteers to work and collaborate.
3. We will continue to provide loaner equipment that you can check out for FREE to aid you in your outdoor pursuits.

We know that change can be hard, so we want to thank you all for getting excited with us on these changes!

Thank you to all our participants who come to our classes to learn more about the outdoors. You are the reason we, at the Outdoor Campus, enjoy and love what we get to do!

Thank you to all the staff, interns, and volunteers who have worked so hard this last year to keep the Outdoor Campus moving forward through programming, customer service, and maintenance.

Thank you to the Friends of the Outdoor Campus Advisory Board and the South Dakota Parks and Wildlife Foundation who have worked to fundraise and advocate for the Outdoor Campus in an ever-growing Sioux Falls Community.

Thank you for having fun and getting connected with South Dakota’s great outdoors!

David Parker

Director of The Outdoor Campus Sioux Falls

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STAFF

7

PERMANENT STAFF

2

CONTRACTED STAFF

2

SEASONAL STAFF

5-11

INTERNS

Internship positions include horticulture, naturalist, outreach, volunteer coordinator, and school coordinator.

Contracted positions include a School Coordinator, which is a partnership between GFP and South Dakota State University 4-H Extension Office and a R3 and Veterans Coordinator, which is a partnership between GFP and Pheasants Forever.

99

VOLUNTEERS

The Outdoor Campus has volunteer positions to help with gardening/landscaping, the information desk, educational assistance, and community service.

OUR IMPACT

974

CLASSES OFFERED

21,982

PARTICIPANTS

94,708

PEOPLE HIKED THE TRAILS

101

HUNTERS PARTICIPATED IN
THE HUNT 101 PROGRAM

4,884

VOLUNTEER HOURS
DONATED

86,224

PEOPLE ENTERED THE
OUTDOOR CAMPUS

SPECIAL EVENTS

Women in Science (3/6)

Focuses on getting young women excited about careers in science.

1,000 8th grade female students from 27 schools

Water Festival (3/12-3/13)

Focuses on the importance of water and conservation.

750 local 4th grade students

Hood Familyfest Fun Cruise (6/1)

The Outdoor Campus was a unique stop where participants could pick up a "goodie bag" and then go fishing.

1,177 individuals

Women's Try It Night (6/20)

Create a space for women of all ages to come and try some new outdoor skills.

35 females

Outdoor Campus Expansion Ground-breaking (7/12)

Official kick off for construction for the Outdoor Campus Expansion.

3rd Annual Gear Giveaway (8/10)

The focus of this event is to accept donated outdoor gear, clean it up, and give it back out to new outdoor users.

55 individuals donated 2,270 pieces of gear and 980 people attended

Women in the Wild (8/20)

Provides opportunities for women of all ages to come and try some new outdoor skills.

35 females

SPECIAL COURSES



Casting for Recovery

South Dakota held their second Casting for Recovery retreat for women somewhere along their journey with breast cancer. on October 4-6 at NeSoDak Bible Camp in Waubay. The 13 participants were able to learn about fly fishing, practice casting and fly tying, and attend group sessions led by medical and psych/social staff. They ended with fly fishing with a guide!



Hunting 101

2024 was a successful year for the Hunting 101 classes with 27 hunters in the spring and 74 hunters in the fall along with seven volunteers that donated over 880 hours. GFP has also created a unique opportunity where a nonprofit organization can apply to help conduct a special deer hunt for resident disabled veterans. The sponsoring organization can obtain and pay for 10 “any deer” tags that the participating resident disabled veterans can use in the field on these supported hunts.

Fishing at Family Park

This is a longstanding open house fishing program that Game, Fish and Parks and Sioux Falls Parks and Recreation partners to offer.

In 2024, 7 classes were offered reaching 182 participants (106 youth, 76 adults)

Dark House Spearing

This program takes students through the ins and outs of this unique type of fishing and ends with participants being able to try their hand at spearing.

In 2024, the Outdoor Campus offered 3 of these classes reaching 12 participants

Snorkel Spearfishing

One unique class offering is Snorkel Spearfishing, which is only possible in the area due to the clear waters of Lake Lorraine. The program walks students through safety when snorkel spearfishing, basics of the sport, and then allows students to try it out in the water.

OTHER SERVICES

ROOM USAGE

The Outdoor Campus encourages the use of our facility as a free meeting space for the public.

128 meetings were held by nongovernment organizations, city departments, state departments, and other clubs.

LOANER EQUIPMENT

The Outdoor Campus has a wide range of loaner equipment available for the public to use for free including Critter Crates, snowshoes, live traps, life jackets, waterfowl decoy bags, waterfowl decoy trailers, and action track chairs.

The most popular option were the critter crates with 85 check outs.

2024 HIGHLIGHTS



Archery Range Construction

Groundbreaking for the Outdoor Archery Range at the Outdoor Campus in July kicked off construction. Throughout the Fall of 2024, construction occurred to create the 60-yard archery range that will be free to the public to use anytime Sertoma Park is open. This project is set to be completed in 2025 and construction on the indoor expansion is set to start in 2025.



RMEF Virtual Tour

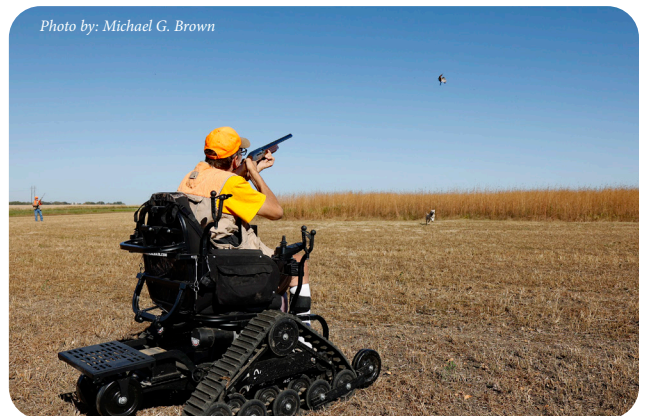
- » In 2024, GFP released the Elk of the Black Hills Virtual Tour. This free to use Virtual Reality experience immerses students in the Black Hills where they can learn from Game, Fish and Parks Staff about the habits and habitats of elk. To accompany this project, an activity worksheet was created and is free to download to gauge student learning.
- » Funding for this project came from a generous Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Grant.



Aquatic Invasive Species Education

- » During all fishing classes in 2024 a 5-minute talk on Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) was included. This led to 5,243 participants being reached during the 218 fishing classes the Campus offered.
- » On top of this, the Outdoor Campus in cooperation with South Dakota State University and South Dakota State University Extension Office completed the Middle School AIS curriculum and led the first ever pilot training. At this 2-day training, 8 teachers were trained on the curriculum and had the opportunity to provide valuable feedback.

Photo by: Michael G. Brown



Action Track Chair Videography

Thanks to a grant from the Mary Chilton Chapter of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution through the Mary Chilton DAR Foundation, funds were provided to create a series of videos to help with understanding the Department's Action Track Chairs. During the month of September, videography was completed, and final products will be coming in 2025.



The Big Sioux Fly Fishing Club

In May of 2024, The Big Sioux Fly Fishing Club met for the first time. The focus of this group is to meet monthly to fly fish, fly ty, and listen to guest speakers. This group is a partnership between the Outdoor Campus Sioux Falls and the Friends of the Big Sioux River. To date, this group has 55 active members.



President's Lifetime Achievement Award

Masako Gould, longtime volunteer with the Outdoor Campus, was presented the President's Lifetime Achievement Award for her over 5,000 hours of volunteer service.

SPECIAL THANKS

Friends of The Outdoor Campus Advisory Board

The purpose of this Board is to serve in an ongoing advisory role and to work collaboratively with the Director of the Sioux Falls Outdoor Campus to provide advice and insight on facility needs and potential improvements, projects, initiatives, and education programming priorities at the Sioux Falls Outdoor Campus.

Board Members:

Jan Nicolay (1942-2024), Board Chair
Tim Kromminga, Board Chair
Royce Meritt, Board Member
Amanda Oines, Board Member
Eric Olson, Board Member
Derek Maassen, Board Member
Josh Johnson, SFPR – Ex Officio Member
Kristina Coby, SD PWF – Ex Officio Member
Kip Rounds, SD GFP – Ex Officio Member
David Parker, SD GFP – Ex Officio Member

Kathy Anderson, Board Member
Emmett Keyser, Board Vice-Chair
Drew Woelfel, Board Member
Brian Klatt, Board Member
Jeff Scherschligt, Board Member
Cheryl Ulvestad, Board Member
Eric Kurtz, Board Member
Jamie Simko, Board Member
Richie Hutchinson, Board Member

South Dakota Parks and Wildlife Foundation

The board in cooperation with the South Dakota Parks and Wildlife Foundation helped to finalize the \$3 Million Capital Campaign Project.

IN MEMORY OF:

The board lost its founding chair, Jan Nicolay, in 2024. In memory of Jan and all of her efforts for outdoor education, the Friends Board voted to name the new expansion classroom area the "Nicolay Learning Center" to commemorate all of Jan's memory.



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.