

**Minutes of the Game, Fish, and Parks Commission
December 12-13, 2019**

Chairman Gary Jensen called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. CT at the Dakota Prairie Playhouse in Madison, South Dakota. Commissioners Gary Jensen, Travis Bies, Mary Anne Boyd, Jon Locken, Scott Phillips, Russell Olson, Douglas Sharp, Robert Whitmyre and approximately 45 public, staff, and media were present.

DIVISION OF ADMINISTRATION

Conflict of Interest Disclosure

Chair Jensen called for conflicts of interest to be disclosed. None were presented.

Approval of Minutes

Jensen called for any additions or corrections to the November 7-8, 2019 meeting minutes or a motion for approval.

Motion by Olson with second by Whitmyre TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 7-8, 2019 MEETING. Motion carried unanimously.

Additional Commissioner Salary Days

No additional salary days were requested.

Second Century Initiatives Update

Kevin Robling, deputy secretary, and Tom Kirschenmann, deputy wildlife directory, provided an update on the status of Second Century initiatives.

WMI Review

Keith Fisk, wildlife program administrator, and Bill Moritz and Chris Smith from WMI provided details on the review of the Wildlife Damage Management (WDM) /Animal Damage Control (ADC) Programs.

Missouri River Refuges

Kevin Robling, deputy secretary, provided an update on Missouri River refuges.

R3 Waterfowl Efforts

Kevin Robling, deputy secretary, and Heather Villa, wildlife administration chief, provided an update on R3 waterfowl efforts.

National Wild Turkey Federation Conservation Officer of the Year Award

Ron Schauer presented Matt Talbert the Conservation Officer of the Year Award.

GFP Leadership Development Program Graduation

Tori Littlefield, Lumin Advantage Consulting, provided a program overview & awards presentation for the first cohort of the GFP Leadership Development Program.

OPEN FORUM

Jensen opened the floor for discussion from those in attendance on matters of importance to them that may not be on the agenda.

Michael Brown, Sioux Falls, SD East Dakota NWTF, has been hunting turkey for approximately 36 years. Spoke regarding his personal views not local NWTF chapter. Incident in Black Hills years ago when a hunter was shot then a year later had an

incident when a rifle was pointed at him when he was working turkey down the road. Another time saw a rancher shoot a turkey from a road and referred to it like picking them off like a sniper. Does not want this passed feeling it is unsafe step backwards.

Jim Pitman, Emporia, KS NWTF opposed to the proposal as rifles pose an unnecessary safety risk. Most hunters are in full camo in the field near a decoy and could easily be put in the line of fire and possibly mortal risk. Statistics show more incidents when rifles are involved.

Francis Strohfus, Watertown, SD NWTF State President spoke on his own behalf as a landowner noting it's important for people to learn to hunt the turkey in a respectful manor will keep people involved. Safety is number one and we are on a good track and need to keep it as is and opposes the proposal.

Barrett Bauer, Hayti, SD avid turkey hunter for 18 years using rifles, shotguns and bows and says there are safety issues with every method, and they should be addressed. Said comments noted the camo and decoys are so good and people are okay with the use of them but oppose the rifle. Said it could be a suggestion that hunters wear orange to and from their blinds to increase safety. Believes quality of game meat is hire when rifle is used. Recommended commission approve the proposal

Bridget Bauer, Watertown, SD noted the importance of getting people out in the field and recommends offering different methods to provide opportunity for kids to keep them interested and older generations as it may be easier.

Bruce Bauer, Watertown, SD asked the commission to approve the proposal and allow the option of rifles and promote varied and diverse opportunities in a time when we are losing hunters is important and aligns with the second century initiative. Ask commission to be careful of increasing safety as it may end up causing a ban on rifles or decoys for other seasons. Said there has not been a rifle accident on the prairie in the last 40 years.

Zack Hunke, Watertown, SD introduced himself as the new president of the South Dakota Wildlife Federation. Noted grassroots habitat efforts done by federation to bring forward contributions for habitat.

PROPOSALS

Waterfowl

Youth

Chad Switzer, wildlife program administrator, presented recommended changes to the youth waterfowl hunting season to modify the start date from beginning on the Saturday prior to the last Saturday of September to beginning 14 days prior to the Saturday closest to September 24.

Motion by Boyd, second by Olson TO MODIFY THE YOUTH WATERFOWL SEASON TO BEGIN 14 DAYS PRIOR TO THE SATURDAY CLOSEST TO SEPTEMBER 24. Motion carried unanimously.

Duck

Switzer presented the recommended changes to the duck hunting season to decrease the scaup daily bag limit from 3 to 1 and modify the start date of the Low

Plains Middle and North Zones from beginning on the last Saturday of September to the Saturday closest to September 24.

Motion by Phillips, second by Sharp TO DECREASE THE SCAUP DAILY LIMIT TO 1 AND MODIFY THE START DATE FOR THE LOW PLAINS MIDDLE AND NORTH ZONES TO THE SATURDAY CLOSEST TO SEPTEMBER 24.

Goose

Switzer presented the no recommended changes to the 2020 goose hunting season August Management Take.

Switzer presented the no recommended changes to the 2020 early fall Canada goose hunting season.

Switzer presented the no recommended changes to the 2020 goose hunting season.

Switzer presented the no recommended changes to the 2020 Special Canada Goose Hunting Season.

Tundra Swan

Switzer presented the recommended changes to the Tundra Swan hunting season to reduce the total number of licenses from 1,675 to 1,300 and reduce the number of licenses available for nonresidents from 250 to 200.

Motion by Sharp, second by Phillips TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF LICENSE FROM 1,675 TO 1,300 AND NONRESIDENT LICENSES FROM 250 TO 200. Motion carried unanimously.

Sandhill Crane

Switzer presented the no recommended changes to the 2020 sandhill crane hunting season.

Snipe

Switzer presented the no recommended changes to the 2020 common snipe hunting season.

Spring Light Goose Conservation Order

Switzer presented the no recommended changes to the 2020 spring light goose conservation order.

Rules Review Chapters 41:06-41:07

Andy Alban, program administrator, explained that during the 2019 Legislative Session HB 1162 was introduced by Representative Gosch. The intent of the bill was to have the Department conduct a systematic review of our administrative rules. During the review the Department was to identify rules that are irrelevant, inconsistent, illogically arranged, or unclear in their intent and direction. After discussions with Representative Gosch, the Department agreed to conduct the systematic review without legislation and to report its findings and corrective changes back to the Executive Board of the Legislative Research Council. During the December meeting the Commission formally proposed suggested changes to ARSD 41:06 and 41:07 to correct inconsistencies, remove unnecessary barriers and arrange rules logically thus

promoting an administrative code that benefits current, former and new users. This rules package will be finalized in March 2020.

The Department recommends the following rule changes for the following administrative rules in an effort to reduce redundancy, increase transparency and improve consistency:

Chapter 41:06

Motion by Whitmyre, second by Locken TO APPROVE THE RECOMMENDED CHANGES AS RECOMMENDED TO RULES IN CHAPTER 41:06. Motion carried unanimously.

Chapter 41:07

Motion by Locken, second by Sharp TO APPROVE THE RECOMMENDED CHANGES AS RECOMMENDED TO RULES IN CHAPTER 41:07. Motion carried unanimously.

West River Spring Turkey – Use of Rifles

Tom Kirschenmann, wildlife deputy director, presented the recommended change to the spring turkey hunting season to allow the use of rifles (rimfire, centerfire, and muzzleloading) on private land (excluding private land leased by GFP for public hunting access through the Walk-In Area program) for West River spring prairie hunting units.

Flathead Catfish Trophy Regulations

John Lott, fisheries chief, presented the recommended changes to modify the flathead catfish trophy regulations proposal to apply only to inland waters rather than statewide.

Motioned by Phillips, second by Olson TO AMEND THE PROPOSAL TO ONLY APPLY TO INLAND WATERS. Motion carried unanimously.

DIVISION OF WILDLIFE

Resolution Supporting Recovering America's Wildlife Act

Tom Kirschenmann, wildlife deputy director, presented the resolution supporting recovering America's Wildlife Act for Commission approval. Kirschenmann explained this resolution would show support for state policy and legislation to broaden dedicated funding mechanisms for wildlife conservation and wildlife action plan implementation and aid in providing the required match when new dedicated federal funding is secured.

Motion by Whitmyre, second by Locken TO ADOPT RESOLUTION 19-30 (APPENDIX A) SUPPORTING THE PASSAGE OF THE RECOVERING AMERICA'S WILDLIFE ACT. Motion carried unanimously.

AIS Filtration System

BJ Schall, wildlife biologist, presented a powerpoint on AIS filtration system.

Law Enforcement Efforts

Regional conservation officer supervisors Kraig Haase and Jeremy Roe provided a powerpoint to the Commission on law enforcement efforts.

Rapid City Shooting Range

John Kanta, wildlife regional supervisor explained GFP is currently partnering with the Ellsworth Development Authority to identify and develop a firearm range opportunity near Rapid City and Ellsworth Airforce Base. The firearms facility will provide a multi-agency firearms training facility in western South Dakota directly supporting Ellsworth Air Force Base (EAFB) B-21 requirements, South Dakota Department of Game, Fish, and Parks public rifle and handgun range needs; and existing South Dakota Army National Guard training and certification to meet readiness requirements. This opportunity will serve as a free public rifle, shotgun, handgun and archery range within a 30-minute driving radius of Rapid City open to the public, youth groups, shooting sports groups and others. The range will also serve airmen and women from Ellsworth Air Force Base and public from Box Elder.

License Sales Update

Heather Villa, wildlife administration chief, presented the resident and nonresident license sales totals as of December 3rd.

CWD

Chad Switzer, wildlife program administrator, provided an update on chronic wasting disease.

DIVISION OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Roy Lake Resort Transfer/Sale

Scott Simpson, parks and recreation division director, provided the Commission information on the status of Roy Lake Resort and discussed next steps.

EcoSun Prairie Partnership at Good Earth

Jeff VanMeeteren, parks and recreation regional supervisor, and Dr. Carter Johnson presented information on the EcoSun Prairie Partnership with Good Earth State Park – Good Earth State Park has initiated a 5-year lease agreement with EcoSun Prairie Farms, Inc. to convert 144 acres of park land to native prairie/habitat. Of the 144 acres, approx. 106 acres have been in ag production over the past 20 years with the balance being in marginal lands comprised of draws, drainages, etc. immediately adjacent to the crop lands. EcoSun Prairie's goal is to create an economically sustainable farm operation/model that showcases alternative land use practices for marginal lands to landowners involved in production agriculture. Income is derived from the sale of native grass seed, forage hay, and short-term grazing leases for cattle. EcoSun Prairie will annually provide their research and expertise to park staff at Good Earth in the management of the departments native grass stands throughout the park as well as marketing this research to SD landowners in the near future.

Buffalo Auction

Matt Snyder, parks and recreation regional supervisor, presented the Commission information on the 54th Annual Buffalo Auction.

CSP Repair/Maintenance Update

Josh Schmaltz, Regency vice president, and Ryan Flick, Regency operations manager, provided the Commission with the Custer State Park resort repair and maintenance update

Madison Area Park Update

Willy Collignon, parks and recreation regional supervisor and John Bame, park manager, provided an update on the state parks and recreation areas in the Madison area.

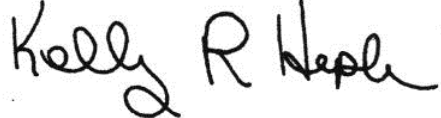
Revenue, Camping and Visitation Reports

Al Nedved, parks and recreation deputy director, provide the year to date revenue, camping and visitation reports for all parks and districts.

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 11:15 A.M. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kelly R Hepler". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kelly R. Hepler, Department Secretary

Appendix A
Resolution 19-30
Resolution of the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Commission
“Recovering America’s Wildlife Act”

WHEREAS, Congress passed the Pittman-Robertson, Dingell-Johnson and Wallop-Breaux acts to establish funds financed by hunters, recreational shooters, anglers, and boaters to support wildlife and sportfish recovery and management; and

WHEREAS, a dedicated and sustainable funding mechanism is needed for many species of fish and wildlife that are not pursued by hunters, trappers, or anglers; and

WHEREAS, South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks has the primary statutory responsibility for the management of fish and wildlife in the state; and

WHEREAS, South Dakota’s Wildlife Action Plan addresses the needs of the state’s fish and wildlife species, including species of greatest conservation need; and

WHEREAS, limited financial resources are available to fully implement the state’s Wildlife Action Plan to help prevent future threatened and endangered species listings and provide for the needs of all species and key habitats; and

WHEREAS, the Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America’s Diverse Fish and Wildlife Resources, composed of 26 business and conservation leaders, recommended that a new funding mechanism be established for state fish and wildlife conservation and management for current and future generations; and

WHEREAS, the Panel recommended that Congress dedicate up to \$1.3 billion annually to the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Subaccount of the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act to diversify the funding and management of all fish and wildlife; and

WHEREAS, the Recovering America’s Wildlife Act would fulfill the Panel’s recommendation by making funds available to address the needs of species of greatest conservation need as identified in state wildlife action plans; and

WHEREAS, dedicated federal funding will also require a nonfederal or eligible federal match, similar to requirements of the Pittman-Robertson, Dingell-Johnson and Wallop-Breaux acts.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Commission supports the Recovering America’s Wildlife Act, which will dedicate \$1.3 billion annually to the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Subaccount of the Pittman-Robertson Act to help address the needs of all fish and wildlife, including species occurring in South Dakota; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Commission supports the Alliance for America’s Fish and Wildlife’s campaign to secure passage of the Recovering America’s Wildlife Act; and

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Commission, at its December 12-13, 2019 meeting, acknowledges its support for state policy and legislation to broaden dedicated funding mechanisms for wildlife conservation and Wildlife Action Plan implementation and aid in providing the required match when new dedicated federal funding is secured.

Gary Jensen, Chair
Game, Fish and Parks Commission

Scott Phillips, Vice Chair
Game, Fish and Parks Commission

Public Comments

Other

Anthony Filholm

Brookings SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

The petition to develop an age plus preference system that favors older people who have applied a long period time should be rejected. It is already heavily weighted in their favor with the cubing. We cant keep bending to every special interest in the me-me crowd. It is a chance drawing, accept that.

Bruce Smith

Burlington WI

Position: other

Comment:

TO INCREASE REVENUE FOR THE STATE'S SMALL BUISNESS, WHY NOT EXPAND THE NUMBER OF NON-RESIDENT WATERFOWL LICENSES, SPLIT THE 10 PERIOD. THIS WILL MAKE UP SOME OF THE MILLIONS LOST NOW THAT NON-RESIDENT PHEASANT HUNTERS THAT HAVE QUIT COMING DUE TO PATHETIC POPULATIONS

West River Spring Turkey-Use of Rifles

Donald Massa

Edgemont SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

I oppose allowing the use of rifles for turkeys during any spring season in SD whether on public or private lands.

This is a safety issue, not an R3 issue. The quality of turkey decoys, the improvements in camo clothing and the increased use of ground blinds has made it much more difficult to identify the proper targets at longer ranges. I have only been "shot at" in the field once and it was by a rifle turkey hunter on private land that was "stalking turkey calls"...he missed, thankfully.

The argument that a rifle is easier to handle than a shotgun is not valid as both of my sons have harvested turkeys with shotguns since they were 8 years old during Nebraska's season. If these hunters aren't able to handle a shotgun than they probably aren't ready to turkey hunt.

I am also a landowner and don't expect to have the state regulations changed for the same season just because it's on private land. It just adds more confusion to an already hard to understand regulation book.

Charles Anderson

Pierre SD

Position: support

Comment:

I think this is great for senior citizens and when we do mentored hunts for our grand children.

Dale Gregg

Whitewood SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

This may be the most ridiculous proposal submitted. Using optics during muzzle loader season was denied yet this proposal shouldn't even see the light. Turkey hunting is about the experience of bringing them in close. Additionally, the use of a rifle creates too much of a safety issue. Even if it's private land, the potential of someone getting shot is real. You want to do something positive for hunters? Legalize crossbow which will bring in more hunters and legalize optics for muzzle loaders.

George Bogenschutz

Nunda SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

I have never hunted turkeys with a rifle altho I am well qualified to do so. My experience hunting with others who tried was disappointing as they were shooting at ranges approaching 300 yards in a crosswind and wounded at least one jake, possibly 2 and hit a third well enough that it sought cover in some brush. As my partner has a slight disability moving very fast I was the designated coup de grace guy to hoof it over there and dispatch it with the 870.

I think this would be a scene repeated far too often if rifles are reinstated. Please vote NO on this proposal.
Thank you, George Bogenschutz, Nunda, SD

Jim Gruber

Estelline SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

give me a break... let me get this right.. the fellow on the other side of the fence, and anybody hunting his land can use a rifle on turkey.. yet, the guy on the other side on gfp leased or owned sd land is not allowed to use a rifle.. what kind of operation are you people trying to run... as usual,, catering to a few cry babies.

Randy Rysavy

Wagner SD

Position: support

Comment:

I wish it would be state wide on private land. If turkeys are to be considered BIG GAME then we should have the optin to use a rifle. I am an east river land owner and on the state chapter committe of the Natinal Wild Turkey Federation for the last 10 years. If you want to regulate State and Federal land that is fine.

Ron Koth

Rapid City SD

Position: support

Comment:

I support the hunter option of using a rifle for west river spring prairie turkey. Preclusion of the use of a rifle seems arbitrary and should be at the discretion of the hunter.

Ron Schara

Ramsey MN

Position: oppose

Comment:

Let's see if I understand this action. The joy of turkey hunting is to call a gobbler within shotgun range. You are choosing to allow hunters to avoid that thrill and shoot a gobbler at what...50 yards, 100, 200 yards. To have a low angle so bullet may ricochet? And to turn a sportsman into nothing more than a marksman. I've hunted South Dakota turkeys for 50 plus years. I can tell you about the danger, prairie or Black Hills. When will you stand up for Fair Chase? You should be ashamed.

Don Doty

Divide Co 80814 CO

Position: support

Comment:

I was born and raised in Wagner SoDak. I still own a farm in Charles Mix county. I have applied for nonresident west river spring turkey licenses for more than 30 years. I have had great success with hunting on private land with my turkey caliber rifle. The main reason I choose to hunt in SoDak as a non resident is that I can use a rifle during spring turkey season. I was very disappointed when I found out the state has changed the law. By doing this it presented ME and my hunting GROUP to having to now look for another state that offers us the opportunity to hunt with our my rifles. We are older retired hunters that have built great relationship with landowners, restaurant owners, hotel owners, gas station owner over the many years we have hunt in Gregory county. It sadden me to know that I will have begin to build new friendships and relationships in another state that offers our group the ability to hunt in ethical and successful manner. I hope that my voice is being heard and that the state of SoDak will hear the people that have supported the landowners and state for so many years. The decision the state will make will determine to where myself and or my group will apply this coming spring rifle turkey hunting. Especially since we have support the NWTF and the state for so many years.

Respectfully.

DON DOTY

373 Pinaceae Heights

Divide CO 80814

dotyfarms6344@gmail.com

Michael Brown

Sioux Falls SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Greetings SD GF&P Game Commission,

My name is Michael Brown. I live in Sioux Falls and am a committee member of the East Dakota Chapter of the NWTF.

I understand that a proposal has been brought up to bring back the use of rifles for turkey hunting west river. I would like to share my thoughts on the topic.

I have approximately 36 years of experience turkey hunting in South Dakota, from the Black Hills to the Prairies (east and west river), and safety, not the harvesting of a bird, is the most important thing out there.

I remember being asked approximately 25 years ago to submit my opinion by the SD GF&P on this subject...and my answer then, as it is now is...NO RIFLES ALLOWED.

I have several reasons. Safety is the biggest. I was in the Black Hills at approximately the same time there was a fatal incident involving a spring turkey hunter using a rifle.

The following year, I was again in the Hills when I was working some birds down a logging road, the hunt was interrupted by another hunter driving down the road in his vehicle, when he got out and pointed his gun (a rifle) in my direction. Needless to say I was scared to death that I would be the next casualty. As I walked by the hunter, I showed my disgust...not only because he was driving his vehicle in an area that was closed to vehicles...but the fact that he did not apologize or feel embarrassed for his actions.

I also witnessed back in the mid 80's a rancher shoot at a turkey from the road. My thought then, as it is now...that is not very sporting or challenging. The whole idea about turkey hunting is to get the bird right in your face so you can experience the fullness of a turkey hunt. Not pick them off at 200 yards like a sniper, because you don't want to or are too lazy to get out there and do the work it takes to bring the bird closer.

If the hunter has physical limitations...there are ways to set up blinds and transport the hunter to the blind so they can sit and wait for the birds.

I have had other incidences during my years of turkey hunting where I have witnessed (but could not able to identify) a hunter shoot at turkeys from the road with a rifle.

I feel that if this proposal is approved, it will mean that SD and the GF&P will have taken a huge step backward in ensuring the safety and integrity of turkey hunting in South Dakota.

Turkey hunting in South Dakota should be by shotgun and / or archery only. In an age where we want everything yesterday...cutting corners...to harvest a wild turkey should not be one of them. Hunters need to get out there and burn a little shoe leather and experience the fullness that a spring turkey hunt brings. The up close and personal feeling you get from being out in the woods or open prairie. To pat yourself on the back when you as a hunter, you had to work a little harder to get and hopefully harvest your bird. And if successful, the feeling of carrying your prize back to your vehicle.

And don't forget, how we teach our youth on how traditional ways of hunting turkeys...still work.

I would also say that there are times that the land I hunt west river has state and private land next to each other. I can't image a stray bullet heading my way if I was on Public Land from someone hunting on private land.

If asked, I would gladly testify at the commission meeting about this topic.

Michael Brown

John Moisan

Fort Pierre SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Dear Commission Members: I am OPPOSED to the use of rifles for Spring Turkey Hunting ANYWHERE in South Dakota. Details on attached Word Document.

John Moisan

Fort Pierre SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

I OPPOSE the use of rifles for West River or anywhere in SD. Word document originally sent failed delivery. New document attached.

Caleb Kervin

Brookings SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

As a hunt safe instructor and a hunter this is unsafe and just a waste of game. The rifle round will not be stopped by a turkey it will still have a large amount of energy when it leaves the bird that is unsafe or could result in an accidental overbag of game.

Roger Thue

Colman SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

I oppose the use of rifles for any form of turkey hunting. I feel it is a safety risk, even if only on private land. Those that are in favor of it are not likely in favor of it for sport. They are likely just wanting to eliminate turkeys or are just plain lazy. Let's keep the sport in hunting and make everyone use shotguns or bows that want to harvest a turkey.

Mike Kervin

Brookings SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

I'd like to express my disappointment with the commission if they were to allow rifles for the hunting of wild turkeys.

I compare the opportunistic hunter who shoots wild turkey with a rifle to the criminals who shoot at geese feeding in a field, which we know has led to deaths.

Hunting turkeys is a sport which sportsmen/sportswomen study and call the game bird within range for a good shotgun kill shot, they don't look for the opportunity to shoot long distance at a bird; just as a waterfowl hunter lures the birds close with calling and decoys, true turkey hunters do the same.

I have been hunting turkey for almost 43 years and, as I was trained, I don't take long shots that could injure the bird. I fear that rifle hunters if they don't feel they got a kill shot will not even check out the site for blood, and YES turkeys can be wounded by a rifle bullet and limp off and die without the rifle shooter even checking for blood.

Please do NOT recommend this change, keep turkey hunting a sport, like waterfowl hunting one that the hunter needs some skill to harvest a bird.

Mike Kervin
1608 Buffalo Trail
Brookings

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Commission
Comments: Use of Rifles for Spring Turkey Hunting

Dear Commission Members:

Please allow me to make the following points regarding my 47 years of experience hunting turkeys in South Dakota, Nebraska, Wyoming, Montana, and Missouri.

- I first hunted turkey in Gregory County, South Dakota in 1972
- I have harvested 154 Wild Turkeys: 100 with a 12 gauge, 53 with a 20 gauge, and one with a rifle (fall turkey). I have hunted 6 years for Archery Spring Turkey with no success.
- I hold the #12 NWTF World Record Merriam's Wild Turkey shot in Jackson Co. in 1990
- I have hunted wild turkey in 16 west river counties and 4 east river counties.
- In 1980, I was nearly shot by a hunter using a 270 caliber rifle in Gregory County, north of Bonesteel, SD on Scalp Creek. The hunter, who had permission on adjacent private property, shot a gobbler a mere 47 steps in front of me as the turkey was coming to my call.
- In about 1988, my friend and I witnessed 4 gobblers shot out of the tree with rifles, 30 minutes before legal shooting hours in Custer State Park. This event happened after we had made a 90 minute stalk through the woods in the dark to get into position for a close in shotgun hunt. We were 30 yards from the turkeys when they were killed at long range.
- In about 1990, on a fall turkey hunt in Custer State Park, a rifle hunter killed a turkey from the road at a distance of over 200 yards, while I was positioned in the woods 25 yards from a small flock of birds
- In 1997, a hunter with a rifle stalked my 13 year old twin boys and I as we hunted over decoys on Cherry Creek in Haakon County, SD. It was only when we came screaming out of the woods waving orange flags, did he stop, jump into his pickup and speed off.
- In short, I have personally had numerous close calls at being shot with a rifle, all of which were west river. Rifle hunting is **NOT SAFE** and presents **EXTREME DANGER** to others at distances over one mile.
- I am a landowner in Tripp County, South Dakota.
- Considering the use of "modern" turkey hunting equipment such as advanced calls, blinds, turkey fan decoys, realistic turkey decoys, high tech camouflage clothing, and other devices, hunters using traditional shotgun methods or archery are placed in **EXTREME DANGER** by unknowing hunters with a rifle at extraordinary distances.
- The use of a rifle does not provide a quality outdoor experience for the sportsman, especially young turkey hunters who need to get the "up close and personal" experience of having a wild gobbler in a full strut, gobbling at 20 yards. This majestic bird deserves better than being killed at 300 yards by an unseen shooter.
- Finally, as table fare, there is no wild game that surpasses wild turkey with dressing, gravy, mashed potatoes, and other side dishes. When a turkey is body shot with a rifle, no matter the caliber, no matter the bullet grain, no matter the distance or circumstances, there is very little left to eat after the hunt. Killing a turkey for the substantial challenge and table fare is one thing. Killing to be killing with a rifle is wrong. This amazing bird deserves better.

(END)

John Mosian, Pierre, SD

Public Comments

Flathead Catfish Trophy Regulations

Travis Pollreisz

Mitchell SD

Position: support

Comment:

In the past couple of years, I have seen a dramatic increase in catfishing's popularity. This is great, as often these were considered trash fish, but with the increase in popularity comes the increased likelihood of overharvesting. Right now our rivers harbor some monster-sized trophy flatheads, but without restrictions and education about catch and release angling I believe those numbers could begin to dwindle in the coming years as catfishing continues to rise in popularity and people discover better techniques at catching these amazing fish.

Chad Pollreisz

Mitchell SD

Position: support

Comment:

No comment text provided.

Tom Pollreisz

Mitchell SD

Position: support

Comment:

No comment text provided.

West River Spring Turkey-Use of Rifles

Robert Eddy

Spearfish SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Bullets do not recognize boundaries. For the safety of all, and consistency with regulations, please restrict all turkey hunting within the state to No Rifle use. Thank you!

Jim Dahlberg

Hot Springs SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Hunting turkeys with a rifle in the spring is dangerous no matter what property it is on. I have had bullets flying over my head in the past when spring turkey hunting. It is not a pleasant feeling.

Eric Spears

Sioux Falls SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Rifle hunting for Turkeys should not be allowed. Hunters are always in camouflage so hunters using rifles aren't looking for us when sitting by a decoy. Its dangerous and idiotic to use a rifle.

Randy Gaskins

Sturgis SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

This issue is personal for me, I have had two close calls with rifles during turkey hunting, one on public land in the Black Hills, but the other was on a private ranch when two rifle hunters shot from behind me at a flock of turkeys I was calling in. The hunters did not see me, but they were shooting from 200 yards away.

I also do not see the reasoning of different regulations for east and west river. The safety issues are the same on either side of the state.

This is not a hunter recruitment issue, there are very effective turkey shot loads now even in the smaller gauges. The recoil from a .410 or 20 gauge is not too much for younger hunters to handle.

Jim Shaeffer

Montrose SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

I hunted turkeys with shotgun and archery gear in Michigan for 27 years before moving back to South Dakota 12 years ago. I couldn't believe it when I found out that you could shoot turkeys with a rifle in South Dakota. My first fall deer hunting after I got back, I watched a guy in his pasture shoot at least 10 times into a flock of turkeys at over 200 yards with a rifle. I was so disgusted at that blatant lack of sportsmanship. I don't know how many birds he wounded. I was very happy when the rifle restriction for turkey was put in place. This is too noble a big game species to be shot at the long distances that I have seen people try and kill them at. Ensuring a clean kill with a rifle at these distances along with the safety issues that this presents should be reason enough to keep the use of rifles for turkey hunting prohibited. Please do not undo this common sense restriction that many true sportsmen support. Thank you.

Francis Strohfus

Henry SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

As a landowner and a strong advocate of Hunting Wild Turkeys along with habitat restoration. I also have strong reservations of hunting in camouflage with lifelike decoys and calls and knowing that someone with a rifle make make a longrange shot not knowing that I am in the vicinity.

I also believe that the wild turkey living in marginal habitat will be subject to a strong decline in population that they will not be able to recover from. The investment in the Wild Turkey population and the risk of a serious injury from hunting in the environment or rifles.

Thank you. Francis Strohfus NWTF member

November 26, 2019

To: The South Dakota Game Commission

From: Dean Schueler, Sioux Falls, 27-year NWTF member and 25-year NWTF state board member

Re: Use of Rifles on Private Land During the West River Prairie Spring Turkey Season

I want to thank the Game Fish and Parks Department and the South Dakota Game Commission for the opportunity to share some thoughts about the proposal at hand.

The safety issue should always be at the top of our minds when we do any type of hunting. It becomes very critical when we are hunting turkeys since we often use decoys, are clothed in camouflage and are attempting to bring the gobbler in close for a lethal shot. BUT I would submit that the **"experience"** is and should be, part of "fair chase" hunting.

I would like to share 2 personal hunting experiences from over 40 years of turkey hunting and would ask the Game Commission to imagine they are sitting next to me against a tree and think about which scenario they would like to be part of.

First Scenario-It is spring turkey season about 35 years ago and I am using a Savage O/U with a 20 ga. and a .222 which was legal at the time. I have my decoys out. I have been calling a turkey for a long time and he has come to within about 75-90 yards. He is now "hung up" out of range of my shotgun and call as I might, he will not come closer for a shotgun shot. I hit the selector button and go to the .222 as he decides to walk away. I do kill the turkey. It was the only time I ever used a rifle to kill a turkey. After thinking about this, I realized that there had to be more to turkey hunting than just killing a turkey. If I just wanted a turkey I could go to my local grocery store and buy one a lot cheaper.

Second Scenario-It is spring turkey season and I am now using a pump action 12 ga. Mossberg shotgun. I have decoys out. I have been calling in a turkey for quite a while, BUT he is taking his time and won't move much. He too is "hung up" out of range for my shotgun. I try 5-6 different calls-a turkey hunter can never have too many calls-and I am starting to lose patience, but finally he hears something he likes and starts towards my position. He is walking slowly, he begins to fan, he sees my decoys and starts to strut and spin, he fans again and his wings drag the ground and he begins spittin' and drummin'. The sun hits his iridescent feathers and I am almost too enthralled to shoot. I do kill the turkey and I have had one of the greatest thrills and scenes that you can experience in the turkey woods. I have pitted my patience, my calling and my woodsmanship skills against the grandest game bird in America! Which scenario do we want to have residents and non-residents alike remember about their turkey hunt in South Dakota? I would suggest that it is the second scenario that the overwhelming majority of turkey hunters hope to experience.

I would like to end by paraphrasing Colonel Tom Kelly (US Army Ret.), legendary turkey hunter and well-known author with this thought: "The day the American Wild Turkey's gobbling, spitting and drumming don't make my hair stand on end is the day I quit turkey hunting". I feel the same way.

I encourage you to vote NO on this proposal. Again, thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts.