

# GFP Commission Meeting Minutes

AmericInn | Fort Pierre, SD | December 7-8, 2023

## Call Meeting to Order

Chair Rissler called the meeting to order at 1 pm CST at the AmericInn by Wyndham Fort Pierre Conference Center in Fort Pierre, South Dakota, on December 7, 2023. Commissioners Stephanie Rissler, Julie Bartling, Jim White, Robert Whitmyre, Jon Locken, Travis Bies, and Bruce Cull were present. Charles Spring joined via ZOOM. With eight commission members present, a quorum was established. The public and staff can listen via SDPB Livestream and participate via conference or in person, with approximately 52 total participants attending via Zoom or in person.

## 1. Conflict of Interest Disclosure [Action Item]

Chair Rissler requested the disclosure of any potential conflicts of interest, but none were brought forward.

## 2. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes [Action Item]

Chair Rissler called for any additions or corrections to the regular minutes of November 2023 meeting. Minutes are available at <https://gfp.sd.gov/commission/archives/>.

MOTIONED BY BIES, SECONDED BY BARTLING TO APPROVE THE NOVEMBER 2023 REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES. The motion carried unanimously.

## 3. Additional Salary Days [Action Item]

Chair Rissler called for additional salary days from the Commissioners. Rissler and Bies both submitted four additional salary days.

MOTIONED BY WHITMYRE, SECONDED BY WHITE TO APPROVE THE ADDITIONAL SALARY DAYS. The motion carried unanimously.

## 4. 2024 Legislative Item Update [Info Item]

Secretary Robling gave a brief update on the legislative items being brought during the 2024 legislative session.

## 5. 2024 Commission Meeting Calendar Approval [Action Item]

Secretary Robling brought forth the proposed 2024 commission meeting schedule from the Department.

MOTIONED BY LOCKEN, SECONDED BY BARTLING TO APPROVE THE 2024 COMMISSION MEETING CALENDAR. The motion carried unanimously.

## 6. South Dakota GoOutdoors Update [Info Item]

Keith Fisk, Licensing Program Administrator, gave an update on the South Dakota GoOutdoors licensing system.

## 7. New Staff Introduction [Info Item]

Jeff VanMeeteren, Parks & Recreation Director, and Chad Switzer, Deputy Director of Wildlife introduced several new staff throughout the department to the Commissioners.

## Open Forum

Deputy Secretary Scott Simpson opened the floor at 2:01 pm CST for discussion from those in attendance in matters of importance to them that are listed on the agenda not as a finalization or may not be on the agenda. Due to technical difficulties, the open forum was delayed.

- 2:20 pm: Nancy Hilding representing the Prairie Hills Audubon Society discussed various topics.

# GFP Commission Meeting Minutes

AmericInn | Fort Pierre, SD | December 7-8, 2023

Deputy Secretary Simpson closed the Open Forum at 2:23 pm CST.

## **8. BOR Cabin/Trailer Rates for Shadehill/Angostura** [Action Item]

Sean Blanchette, Staff Specialist with the Division of Parks and Recreation presented a permit fee rate increase schedule for the private cabins at Shadehill and Angostura Recreation Areas. These parks are located on land owned by the US Bureau of Reclamation and are subject to federal laws and regulations. Federal regulation requires that private exclusive use permit fees are assessed at fair market value and BOR requires using its Construction Cost Trends – Land Index to achieve fair market value. The index increase from 2023 was 17%. GFP developed a fixed schedule for the remainder of the permit terms with an annual adjustment rate of 5.4% of the BOR index to stabilize the annual fee adjustment for the permit holders. Although these rates are required by BOR, this is a GFP fee which is subject to Commission approval.

MOTIONED BY LOCKEN, SECONDED BY WHITMYRE TO APPROVE THE RATE INCREASES FOR THE CABINS AND TRAILERS FOR SHADEHILL AND ANGOSTURA. The motion carried unanimously.

## **9. Calendar Year 2024 Parks Division Marketing Plan** [Info Item]

April Larson, Marketing Coordinator and Nick Harrington, Communications Manager gave a presentation on the 2024 Marketing Plan for the Parks & Recreation Division.

## **10. Custer State Park Resort Repair & Maintenance Fund Expenditure Plan** [Info Item]

Josh Schmaltz CEO of Ramkota Companies – Custer State Park Resort and Matt Snyder CSP Park Superintendent provided an overview the of the 2023 Repair and Maintenance plan for CSP resort complexes. Over a million dollars was spent on upkeep to the resort facilities that included interior and exterior upgrades and repairs to cabins and lodges throughout the four resort complexes. An overview of anticipated upgrades and repairs was also provided for 2024 consisting of upgrades to lodging restrooms, adding insulation to the Event Barn for better climate control year-round.

## **11. Custer State Park Buffalo Sales & Auction Update** [Info Item]

Matt Snyder CSP Park Superintendent reported on the 58th annual bison auction where 498 animals were sold for a total of \$633,700. Prices were up 30% over the 2022 sale. There were 68 registered bidders with 37 in-person and 31 online. 6 online bidders made a purchase, and 18 onsite bidders make a purchase.

Bison went to buyers from South Dakota (13), Wyoming (3), Alabama, California, Colorado, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, and Tennessee.

## **12. November Monthly Reports: Camping Units and Revenue** [Info Item]

Jeff VanMeeteren, Parks & Recreation Director, gave an update on the camping units and revenue generated during the month of November.

## **13. Statewide Fish Management Plan Revision** [Info Item]

Aquatic Section Chief John Lott presented an update to the commission on fisheries planning efforts for 2024. Major planning efforts occurred for the 2014-2018 and 2019-2023 periods and simpler process is planned for 2024, with a focus on identifying management issues and priorities. Top priorities for fisheries and aquatics management efforts in 2024 are habitat and access improvements, urban and community fisheries, consistently needing stocking requests, and evaluating stockings and other management actions. Priorities for nine statewide fisheries programs and four fisheries management areas were also shared with the commission. The 2024 plan will be available for public comment through January 4<sup>th</sup>. A modified document incorporating changes resulting from public comments will be presented to the commission for adoption at their January 2024 meeting.

# GFP Commission Meeting Minutes

AmericInn | Fort Pierre, SD | December 7-8, 2023

## 14. Black Hills Beaver Survey

[\[Info Item\]](#)

Trenton Haffley, Regional Terrestrial Resource Supervisor and Mike Klosowski, Regional Wildlife Supervisor, provided a report to the commission following an examination of Black Hills beaver populations. In conjunction with the assessment, a multi-agency work group was formed by Game, Fish and Parks staff to facilitate information sharing and formulate recommendations aimed at determining the status of beavers in the Black Hills.

Two major factors emerged during the examination as potential influencers of beaver populations: habitat degradation and environmental issues such as drought and scouring runoff. Additionally, disease, predation, hunting/ trapping, and the low tolerance of beavers on private property were identified as possible contributing factors. A survey was conducted, revealing a decrease in the number of beaver caches from 60 in 2012 to 16 in the recent survey. The survey also indicated a 50% reduction in beaver distribution compared to the 2012 findings now standing at 25%.

In response to these findings, Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) initiated several riparian restoration projects designed to enhance habitat conditions, benefitting not only beavers but also other wildlife and plant communities. GFP staff outlined plans to continue monitoring beaver activity and to implement additional riparian restoration projects.

## 15. River Otter Season Survey

[\[Info Item\]](#)

Alex Solem, Senior Wildlife Biologist, reported the 2023 river otter hunting/trapping season began November 1 with a harvest limit of 20 river otters. This harvest limit was reached on November 18 and the season officially closed November 19 with a total of 20 river otters harvested. River otters were harvested in Grant (1), Deuel (5), Minnehaha (4), Roberts (4), Brown (1), Lake (2), Union (1), Bon Homme (1) and Codington counties (1) within the designated open season boundary. Harvest trends and population demographics are continually being collected for population monitoring efforts.

## 16. Oahe Walleye Fishing Update

[\[Info Item\]](#)

Jake Davis, Fisheries Program Administrator, presented to the Commission an overview of recent walleye fishing activity on Lake Oahe. With the state record walleye being broken twice in a period of three weeks, field staff reported higher than usual use by users on upper Lake Oahe. Field reports have indicated many anglers catching fish over 10lbs. Large walleyes have been observed during spawning efforts and current forage populations have resulted in good growth rates.

## 17. Aquatic Invasive Species End of Year Report

[\[Info Item\]](#)

Jake Davis, Fisheries Program Administrator, presented to the Commission a summary of the 2023 AIS program. Outreach and education efforts remain the primary tool to slow the spread of AIS by providing users with information needed to practice Clean, Drain, Dry. In total, 18,642 watercraft inspections occurred from May-October. Partnerships also continued with federal and state agencies, as well as NGO's and Lake Associations. New zebra mussel confirmed in 2023 included the James River and Sand Lake Refuge, Roy Lake, the Big Sioux River downstream of Lake Kampeska, Big Stone Lake and Lake Oahe.

## 18. Deer Fall Classification Results

[\[Info Item\]](#)

Andy Lindbloom, Senior Wildlife Biologist, reported that herd composition surveys are conducted by GFP every fall to evaluate age (fawn: doe) and sex (buck: doe) ratios across the state. Age ratios provide an estimate of fall recruitment which affects license allocation at the unit level. Statewide recruitment estimates for 2023 are 75 fawns:100 does for white-tailed deer and 63 fawns:100 does for mule deer, both which have increased from 2022.

# GFP Commission Meeting Minutes

AmericInn | Fort Pierre, SD | December 7-8, 2023

## 19. Private Lands Habitat Program Year in Review

[Info Item]

Eric Magedanz, Senior Wildlife Biologist and John Mayrose, Wildlife Biologist, presented information pertaining to 2023 Overview of the Private Lands Habitat Program. The Private Lands Program has seen an increase in impacted acres since 2018. A slight decline is noted in 2023 but could be attributed to a decline in the average size of projects as the overall number of projects increased from 142 in 2022 to 161 in 2023 with still the majority of the month remaining. Wetland restoration projects sharply increased in 2023 and wildlife friendly fence projects continue on their upward trajectory since hiring additional private lands habitat biologists (PLHB). Since the onboarding of new PLHB, project voids in the state are being filled with PLHB reaching landowners in areas that have seen few projects completed most notably in the north central, southwest, and south-central parts of the state. Funding has been expanded in 2023 through seeking additional grant sources through NAWCA, NFWF, SWG, and RCPP. \$25 million in RCPP was recently awarded to implement conservation practices in SD; practices include: grazing management infrastructure, range and forage plantings, soil health practices, and foregone income payment on grass plantings. Ducks Unlimited was the lead and grant administrator but all RCPP partners will harness the program and funding opportunity. Partners include DU, USFWS, SD Grassland Coalition, SD Soil Health Coalition, Audubon Great Plains, Natural Resources Conservation Service. John Mayrose highlighted 3 projects showcasing public hunting access, grazing management, and woody habitat demonstrating the high quality of work being accomplished by PLHB's in SD.

## 20. Hunting Season Report & License Sales Update

[Info Item]

Chad Switzer, Deputy Director of Wildlife, gave a report on the hunting season and license sales.

## 21. Adjourn

[Action Item]

Next meeting is scheduled for January 11-12, 2024, at the Matthews Training Center in the Joe Foss Building in Pierre, SD.

MOTIONED BY WHITE, SECONDED BY BIES TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 9:09 AM CST ON DECEMBER 8, 2023. Motion carried unanimously.

Submitted respectfully,



Kevin Robling, Department Secretary