



# SOUTH DAKOTA GAME, FISH AND PARKS COMMISSION MEETING AGENDA

MAY 7-8, 2026 | CUSTER, SD  
CUSTER STATE PARK EVENT BARN

## MEETING INFO

*This agenda is subject to change without prior notice.*

**Date and Time:** May 7, 2026, from 1-5 pm MT and May 8, 2026, from 8 am-12 pm MT

**Meeting Location:** Custer State Park Event Barn, 13389 US HWY 16A, Custer, SD 57730

**Webinar Info:** We will be using Zoom Webinar® for this meeting. As a participant, you will not have audio or video capabilities by default. During the open forum and public hearing, if you'd like to testify, please 'Raise Your Hand' using the button at the bottom of the screen, or by pressing \*9 on your phone. To lower your hand via phone, press \*9 again. When it's your turn to speak, the meeting host will unmute you, allowing you to have audio but no video. If your phone is muted when called upon, press \*6 to unmute.

- \*9 to 'Raise Your Hand' or 'Lower Your Hand.'
- \*6 to Unmute or Mute

Please inform Gail Buus at [gail.buus@state.sd.us](mailto:gail.buus@state.sd.us) by 1 pm MT if you plan to speak during the meeting. This helps us to accurately identify and call on speakers during the session. Thank you for your cooperation!

**Zoom Webinar:** [Click here to join the meeting](#)  
**Call In:** +17193594580,,91264176710# US

**Meeting ID:** 912 6417 6710

**Passcode:** 970458

**Video Conference ID:** [91264176710@zoomcrc.com](https://zoom.us/j/91264176710)

## AGENDA

### Call Meeting to Order (1 pm MT / 2 pm CST)

#### Division of Administration

##### Action Items

1. Conflict of Interest Disclosure
2. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes available at <https://gfp.sd.gov/commission/archives>
3. Additional Commissioner Salary Days

#### Public Hearing

*The Portion of the meeting is designated for public comment finalizations.*

### Open Forum (2 pm MT / 3 pm CST)

*The portion of the meeting is designated for public comment on petitions, proposals, and other items of interest not on the agenda.*

#### Finalizations

4. Black Hills Firearm Elk Season
5. Deer License

#### Division of Wildlife

##### Action Items

6. Elk Action Plan

##### Informational Items

7. Antelope Hunting Season License
8. Hatchery Development Update
9. Walleye Spawning and Spring Stocking Update 2026
10. AIS Operation Plan



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11. Belle Fourche Walleye Regulation Evaluation
12. Region 1 Habitat Highlights
13. License Sales Reports

## **Division of Parks and Recreation**

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### **Action Items**

14. Bison Hunt License Allocation for Trophy and Non-trophy

### **Informational Items**

15. Bison Herd and Range Conditions
16. CSP Park & Resort Summer Outlook
17. Projects in the West Region
18. CSP Fire Protection Partners
19. Mickelson Trail Events for 2026
20. Veteran's Experiencing the Outdoors Donation Program
21. Marketing Plan for 2026
22. April and YTD Camping Unit and Revenue Reports

## **Solicitation of Agenda Items**

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*Now is the time to submit agenda items for the Commission to consider at a following commission meeting.*

## **Adjourn**

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The next Regular Commission Meeting will be held on June 11-12, 2026 starting at 1 pm CST at Heartland Energy, in Madison, SD.



# Commission Meeting Minutes

## South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks

523 E Capitol Avenue | Pierre, South Dakota 57501

April 9-10, 2026 | Matthews Training Center, Pierre, SD

### REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING

#### Call Meeting to Order

Chair Rissler called the meeting to order at 1 pm CST at the Matthews Training Center, in Pierre, SD on April 9, 2026. Commissioners Stephanie Rissler, Bruce Cull, Travis Theel, Chuck Spring, Julie Bartling, Dean Kirkeby, and Kevin Nyberg were present. Commissioner Robert Whitmyre was present online on Thursday, April 9, 2026, and in person on Friday, April 10, 2026. With eight commission members present or online, a quorum was established. The public and staff could listen via SDPB Livestream and participate via conference or in person, with approximately 58 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 the March 2026 meeting. Minutes are available at <https://gfp.sd.gov/commission/archives/>.

MOTIONED BY CULL, SECONDED BY BARTLING TO APPROVE THE MARCH 2026 REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES. The motion carried unanimously.

#### 3. Additional Salary Days [Action Item]

Chair Rissler called for additional salary days from the Commissioners. Additional days were submitted for approval for one day for Commissioners Nyberg, and Spring and two days for Commissioner Kirkeby.

MOTIONED BY BARTLING, SECONDED BY NYBERG TO APPROVE THE ADDITIONAL COMMISSIONER SALARY DAYS. The motion carried unanimously.

#### 4. License List Request [Action Item]

Senior Staff Attorney, Nick Michels, presented to the commission a license list request from Thomas Druce. Mr. Michels explained that Mr. Druce's stated reasons for wanting a list of active license holders in the state did not fall under any of the categorical prohibitions laid out in ARSD 41:06:02:04 and that, consequently, the Department had no objection to granting Mr. Druce's request. The commission initially denied the license list request.

MOTIONED BY CULL, SECONDED BY NYBERG TO DENY THE LICENSE LIST REQUEST. The motion carried unanimously.

After clarifying testimony from the Department attorney, Michels, the commission voted to reconsider its initial denial.

MOTIONED BY CULL, SECONDED BY BARTLING. The Motion carried unanimously.

The Commission then voted to approve the license list request.

MOTIONED BY CULL, SECONDED BY THEEL. Yea votes (5) Rissler, Bartling, Cull, Theel. Nay votes (2) Nyberg and Spring. The Motion carried by a vote of 5-2.

#### 5. New Staff Introductions [Info Item]

Jeff VanMeeteren, Director of Parks & Recreation, introduced two new employees in the Parks Division: Braedan Berthel, West Whitlocks Recreation Area Park Manager and Jeff Pommerville, Lewis & Clark Recreation Area Building Maintenance Specialist.



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### Public Hearing

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Senior Staff Attorney Nick Michels opened the floor at 2:00 pm CST for discussion from those in attendance in matters of importance to them that are listed on the agenda as finalization.

#### **Agenda Item #8: Antelope and Turkey**

No testimony provided.

#### **Agenda Item #9: Deer**

No testimony provided.

#### **Agenda Item #10: Elk Hunting Seasons**

2:02 pm: Ron Kolbeck of Salem, SD representing the SD Bowhunters Association testified in person in support of the elk finalization.

#### **Agenda Item #11: Waterfowl Hunting Seasons**

No testimony provided.

#### **Agenda Item #12: Bighorn Sheep Hunting Season**

No testimony provided.

Senior Staff Attorney Michels closed the public hearing closed at 2:04 pm.

### Open Forum

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Senior Staff Attorney Nick Michels opened the floor at 2:05 pm CST for discussion from those in attendance on matters of importance to them that are listed on the agenda, not as a finalization or may not be on the agenda.

2:05 pm: Ron Kolbeck of Salem, SD representing the SD Bowhunters Association testified in person in support of the elk action plan.

2:08 pm: Jim Hutmacher of Chamberlain, SD testified in person in support of Petition 252 Walleye and Sauger Limit.

2:11 pm: Janet Moore of Rapid City, SD testified virtually in opposition of the coyote bounty, WDM plan, and in support of the use of lead free ammo.

Senior Staff Attorney Michels closed the open forum at 2:14 pm CST.

### **6. Petition 251 Black Hills Elk Hunting**

[Action Item: Petition]

Mr. Rittberger spoke to the commission on the reasons for bringing forward his petition. He explained landowners in Unit 4 of the Black Hills season are looking for ways to increase cow elk harvest and believes that starting at the same time as bull hunters will help. Director Kirschenmann spoke on behalf of the department and explained the unique situation of Unit 4 and the primary land ownership of privately owned and that access and opportunities are provided through private land. Due to the fact this request was brought forward by one of the landowners, it is important that the Commission and Department provide a public hearing to learn more from other landowners on the matter, as well as hunters. Kirschenmann provided the recommendation to the Commission that they accept the petition and move it into the rule promulgation process. The petition was accepted.



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MOTIONED BY CULL, SECONDED BY SPRING TO ACCEPT THE PETITION. The motion carried unanimously.

### 7. Petition 252 Walleye and Sauger Limit

[Action Item: Petition]

Chris Longhenry, Fisheries Regional Supervisor from the Chamberlain office, presented historical Walleye angler use, catch rates, and harvest information for Lake Francis Case. He also explained the general movement trends for Walleye in the reservoir: they tend to move to the upper section in late fall, stay through early spring, and move toward the lower section during the summer. He acknowledged that during warmer springs, the upper part of the lake may have the only few open boat ramps, which concentrate fishing pressure. However, historical data shows that fishing pressure in May and June has a greater impact on the Walleye population, supporting the current regulations for the harvest levels seen on Lake Francis Case.

Mr. Chmela explained his purpose for bringing this petition to the Commission. He shared that over the past few years the weather has turned nicer earlier in the year, resulting in higher fishing pressure on the north half of Lake Francis Case. Concerns exist that this early pressure is resulting in fewer fish to catch during May, June, and July, and anglers are leaving the area to go fish in other locations. His limit change would help provide for more fish later in the year and ensure there would be fish to catch for locals and those who come to the area. Chris Longhenry, GFP Area Fish Supervisor from Chamberlain, provided a presentation to the Commission on past studies and explained that the limit change will not have an impact on the number of fish available later in the season. His presentation explained multiple variables that impact fish caught throughout the year, and that this type of management activity has been tried before with little success. Director Kirschenmann provided the recommendation to the Commission to deny the petition based on the information presented. It was also discussed for the Department to look at survey methods that could obtain some new information on fishing pressure during this time of the year to coincide with a new fish tagging study being implemented. The Commission denied the petition.

MOTIONED BY NYBERG, SECONDED BY KIRKEBY TO DENY THE WALLEYE AND SAUGER LIMIT PETITION. Yea votes (6) Rissler, Cull, Nyberg, Kirkeby, Spring, Theel. Nay votes (1) Bartling. The motion carried.

### RESOLUTION 26-02

WHEREAS, Wes Chmela of Oacoma, South Dakota, submitted a Petition to the Game, Fish and Parks Commission (Commission) dated March 20, 2026, requesting that the Game, Fish and Parks Commission amend ARSD § 41:07:03:03 (Daily, possession, and length limit restrictions on special management waters) – to change the daily limit of walleye/sauger to 2 for boat and shore fisherman for the area of Lake Francis case from the highway 44 bridge upstream to big bend dam Jan 1 – April 1, or to close walleye harvest for boat anglers for the area of Lake Francis case from the highway 44 bridge upstream to big bend dam Jan 1 – April 1, for the reasons more fully set out in the petition (hereinafter referred to as “the Petition”); and

WHEREAS, all members of the Commission have been furnished with and have reviewed a copy of the Petition; and

WHEREAS, the Commission has been advised that a copy of the Petition has been served on all members of the Interim Rules Review Committee and Director of the Legislative Research Council as required by SDCL § 1-26-13; and

WHEREAS, the Commission has been advised that SDCL § 1-26-13 requires that within thirty (30) days of submission of a Petition, the Commission shall either “deny the petition in writing (stating its reasons for the denials) or shall initiate rule-making proceedings in accordance with SDCL 1-26-4.”; and



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WHEREAS, the Commission has been advised and is of the opinion that a hearing on the Petition is neither statutorily required nor necessary; and

WHEREAS, the Commission has reviewed and carefully considered the requirements and procedures set out in SDCL §1-26-13 and the contents of the Petition, including the reasons advanced by Petitioner to change the daily limit or prohibit walleye harvest for the area of Lake Francis case from the highway44 bridge upstream to big bend dam Jan 1 – April 1; and

WHEREAS, the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks (Department) believes the current walleye harvest limit on Lake Francis Case is appropriate; and

WHEREAS, differential daily limits on select portions of waterbodies will complicate angler compliance and enforcement of regulations; and

WHEREAS, angler use and walleye harvest during January through March is typically a low percentage of the overall use and harvest on Lake Francis Case; and

WHEREAS, the petition is specifically designed to increase May – June walleye catch rates in the Chamberlain area, however this is unlikely to occur due to walleye post spawn movements throughout the reservoir and natural annual catch rate variability caused by midsummer prey fish availability; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Commission does hereby deny the Petition for the reasons hereinabove stated in this Resolution, which said Resolution as adopted by the Commission shall constitute the Commission's written denial of the Petition and its reasons therefore.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Petition, a record of the Commission's discussions concerning same, and this Resolution be made a part of the Minutes of the Commission meeting at which this Resolution is adopted, and further, that the Department be and it is hereby authorized and directed in compliance with SDCL §1-26-13 to serve a copy of an extract of that portion of the Commission minutes which pertain to the Commission's discussion of the Petition and its adoption of this Resolution, including a copy of the Resolution, on all members of the Interim Rules Review Committee and Director of the Legislative Research Council with copies also to be provided to the Petitioner, Wes Chmela of Oacoma, South Dakota.

MOTIONED BY WHITMYRE, SECONDED BY THEEL TO APPROVE THE WALLEYE AND SAUGER LIMIT RESOLUTION. Motion carried unanimously.

### **8. Antelope and Turkey**

[Action Item: Finalization]

The commission finalized rule modifications to antelope and turkey draws presented by Andrew Norton, Wildlife Program Administrator. The changes will allow an individual to select a second choice within the first Antelope draw if they chose the Special Antelope hunting unit. This will result in a delay to the Special Antelope draw from mid-April to early-July, and it will be included as a unit option in the firearm Antelope Hunting Season draw. The Nonresident Archery Antelope on public and private land draw will also be delayed to early-July. The rule changes also resulted in the removal of the 3<sup>rd</sup> antelope draw, which has not been necessary in recent years.

MOTIONED BY THEEL, SECONDED BY BARTLING TO APPROVE THE ANTELOPE AND TURKEY APPLICATION FOR LICENSE FINALIZATION. Motion carried unanimously.

### **9. Deer**

[Action Item: Finalization]

The commission finalized rule modifications to align the Landowner Free Antlerless Whitetail unit to match the Archery and Muzzleloader Antlerless Whitetail units presented by Andrew Norton, Wildlife Program Administrator. GFP staff recommended restricting Archery and Muzzleloader licenses to buck only and the commission discussed license reductions for East River and West River Deer Hunting Season units. The



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changes to deer license types and license numbers would occur via administrative action at the May meeting.

MOTIONED BY THEEL, SECONDED BY CULL TO APPROVE THE DEER APPLICATION FOR LICENSE FINALIZATION. Motion carried unanimously.

### 10. Elk Hunting Seasons

[Action Item: Finalization]

Finalizations on elk hunting seasons were presented by Andrew Norton, Wildlife Program Administrator. The commission finalized rule modifications to allow Landowner-Own-Land Antlerless Elk licenses to be available to qualifying resident landowners in any Prairie Elk Hunting unit. The commission also finalized rule modifications to create an East River Elk Hunting unit, excluding Crow Creek Reservation, and aligned all Prairie Elk Hunting Season dates to September 1 to December 31. In Custer State Park, the commission finalized rule modifications to open the CSP Special Antlerless Elk Hunting Season, with a modification from the proposed rule change to split the antlerless season into two seasons. License number changes for all elk seasons were approved via administrative action to manage elk populations toward hunting unit objectives.

MOTIONED BY BARTLING, SECONDED BY THEEL TO APPROVE THE ELK APPLICATION FINALIZATION. Motion carried unanimously.

MOTIONED BY BARTLING, SECONDED BY SPRING TO APPROVE THE SPECIAL CSP ELK HUNTING SEASON FINALIZATION. Motion carried unanimously.

MOTIONED BY THEEL, SECONDED BY CULL TO AMEND AND APPROVE THE SPECIAL CSP ELK HUNTING SEASON FINALIZATION. Motion carried unanimously.

MOTIONED BY BARTLING, SECONDED BY NYBERG TO APPROVE THE PRAIRIE ELK HUNTING SEASON FINALIZATION. Motion carried unanimously.

MOTIONED BY BARTLING, SECONDED BY CULL TO APPROVE THE BLACK HILLS, CUSTER STATE PARK AND PRAIRIE ELK LICENSE FINALIZATIONS. Motion carried unanimously.

### 11. Waterfowl Hunting Seasons

[Action Item: Finalization]

The commission finalized rule modifications to reduce the daily bag limit from fifteen to eight for the August Management Take and Early Canada Goose Hunting Season presented by Andrew Norton, Wildlife Program Administrator. In addition, the rules were modified to remove five counties from the August Management Take to reduce Canada goose harvest in those areas.

MOTIONED BY CULL, SECONDED BY NYBERG TO APPROVE THE AUGUST MANAGEMENT TAKE AND EARLY FALL CANADA GOOSE FINALIZATIONS. Motion carried unanimously.

### 12. Bighorn Sheep Hunting Season

[Action Item: Finalization]

The commission approved administrative action to increase the number of bighorn sheep licenses from seven to eight presented by Andrew Norton, Wildlife Program Administrator. The additional license will be available in Unit BH4 for a total of two licenses in this unit which includes the Rapid City, Deadwood, and Hell Canyon herds.

MOTIONED BY BARTLING, SECONDED BY SPRING TO APPROVE THE BIGHORN SHEEP HUNTING SEASON FINALIZATION. Motion carried unanimously.



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### 13. Lake Francis Case Update

[Info Item: Wildlife]

Amy Gebhard, Fisheries Biologist from the Chamberlain Office, provided the Commission with an update on Lake Francis Case. The September 2025 lake survey indicated that Walleye abundance is currently above the 9-year average, with growth and condition remaining within typical parameters. Furthermore, creel surveys conducted from April through July reflected typical levels of angler effort and harvest, with Walleye catch rates aligning with the 30-year average of approximately one Walleye per hour.

### 14. Walleye Spawning 2026

[Info Item: Wildlife]

Jake Davis, Fisheries Program Administrator, presented to the Commission an update on walleye spawning operations. Egg requests for 2026 are just over 93 million to meet the request of around 43.5 million walleye/saugeye fry and juveniles to stock 94 waters across the state. Egg collection efforts will start around 4/12 and continue until egg needs are met. Eggs will also be provided by the states of Nebraska, Minnesota, and Iowa, and will be raised at all three state facilities and Gavin's Points National Fish Hatchery. Fish stocking of both hatchery and trap and transfer products has also been occurring and will continue into May.

### 15. Pete Lien and Sons Shooting Complex Update

[Info Item: Wildlife]

John Kanta, Terrestrial Section Chief and Mike Klosowski, Regional Supervisor, gave an update on the Pete Lien & Sons Shooting Sports Complex. The shooting complex has been open since early November 2025. Visitation has far exceeded expectations with over 30,000 visits since opening. There are a number of events and competitions scheduled throughout 2026. Law enforcement agencies from a number of different agencies are training and qualifying on a weekly basis. There is a tremendous amount of excitement for the facility and visitors express great appreciation for the shooting complex.

### 16. License Sales Report

[Info Item: Wildlife]

Director Kirschenmann provided a summary to the Commission on license sales from the beginning of the license year (December 15) through the month of March. Overall, small game and fishing license sales are good. Small game is ahead for both Resident and Nonresident sales, and fishing license sales have picked up over the last month due to nice weather. Kirschenmann explained the department does not expect a lot of change for small game sales over the next month or two, but will continue to monitor fishing license sales. The next few months are important as application periods and drawings occur for elk and combined deer draw.

### 17. Dock 44 Prospectus

[Action Item: Parks]

Sean Blanchette, Parks Division Business Administrator, provided a background of the Dock 44 Marina concession operation at Snake Creek Recreation Area. Because the current lease is in the final year, the Department has conducted an appraisal of the facilities and has developed a prospectus for the business opportunity to be publicly advertised. Blanchette described the required purchase of the Possessory interest, as well as an overview of the current lease's required minimum services and fee structures. The Department is not proposing any reductions to the current level of services or any adjustment to the 5.5% Franchise Fee or the 1.5% Repair and Maintenance Reserve in the draft contract, which will be advertised at a 10-year term. Blanchette stated that the prospectus would be released the day after Commission approval, with interested parties having roughly 80 days to respond, with a late June deadline. Blanchette requested authorization to advertise the prospectus with the draft lease terms and prospectus advertisement timeline discussed with the Commission.

MOTIONED BY BARTLING , SECONDED BY CULL TO APPROVE THE DOCK 44 PROSPECTUS RELEASE TO THE PUBLIC. Motion carried unanimously.



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### 18. Custer State Park Wind and Fire Damage Update

[Info Item: Parks]

Matt Snyder, West Regional Park Supervisor, updated the Commission on cleanup efforts from the December 18 windstorm. All day use facilities and trails are open for use. Staff are still working on fine cleanup of campgrounds. Two salvage contracts are underway. Baker Timber is in the process of clearing downed trees along the northern end of the Wildlife Loop Road. Morgon Logging is working south along HWY 87. Both contractors have removed several tons of material. An update on the Qury Fire was also provided. The Qury fire burned just over 1,200 acres in the park. No structures were impacted and the fire stayed on the forest floor. The fire did burn up approximately 3 miles of boundary fence on the West side of the park. Staff are currently working on replacing this section of fence.

### 19. Missouri River Outlook

[Info Item: Parks]

Pat Buscher, Central Region Park's Supervisor, updated the GFP Commission on the current status of the Missouri River Reservoirs and the season's forecast based upon April 2026 US Army Corps of Engineers data. With reduced mountain snowpack, roughly 70% of normal, the Corps forecast reduced inflows coming into the 3 mainstem reservoirs of Fort Peck in Montana, Garrison in North Dakota, and Oahe in SD. Lake Oahe is predicted to experience reduced inflows, resulting in decreasing water level elevations but providing a serviceable amount of water to keep the vast majority of boat ramps and marinas open and functional on Lake Oahe. The 3 reservoirs downstream from Oahe will experience similar balanced flows in the Sharpe, Frances Case, and Lewis and Clark reservoirs. The area throughout the central Missouri River corridor, experienced a rather dry winter and spring to date, but look forward to improved spring and summer moisture.

### 20. Adventure 250 Program

[Info Item: Parks]

Heather Berg, Parks GIS Program Specialist, and Rachel Comes, Volunteer Coordinator, presented an overview of the 2026 annual park theme, *Adventure 250: Make Your History in South Dakota State Parks*, which aligns with national and state celebrations of America's 250th anniversary and will run from Open House Weekend through Labor Day. The presentation highlighted how the program is designed to encourage repeat visitation, outdoor recreation, and meaningful connections to state parks through a wide variety of themed and accessible activities for all ages. Participants can complete and submit adventures to earn points, with incentives including weekly prize drawings, regional engagement opportunities, and grand prize packages for those reaching 250 points, as well as guaranteed rewards through the Adventure 250 Club. The program will be supported by an interactive map, weekly promotions, and sponsorship from Independent Insurance Agents of South Dakota, with an emphasis on enhancing visitor engagement and showcasing unique experiences across all parks.

### 21. Manager's Conference – Investing In Our Employees

[Info Item: Parks]

Jeff VanMeeteren, Director of Parks & Recreation, explained the purpose and goals of the annual Park Managers Conference that was held April 7-9. Approx. 80 Parks Division staff attended the conference this week, which included 4 speaker presentations, a tour of area parks, and 5 roundtable discussions held with staff to receive their input.

### 22. ARPA Summary

[Info Item: Parks]

Adam Kulesa, Planning and Development Administrator of Parks & Recreation, provided a brief update on the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds appropriated to the South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks. 93% of the projects are complete, and the remaining projects are scheduled to finish during the spring of 2026. Approximately 17.4 million dollars in funds will be utilized upon completion to improve drinking water and wastewater systems across the state.



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### 23. Tagged Fish Program

[Info Item: Parks]

Jeff VanMeeteren, Director of Parks & Recreation, outlined the 2026 goals for the tagged fish program, the 8 water bodies that will be stocked with tagged fish, a participant survey, and how the department will market the program to attract anglers to state parks.

### 24. March and YTD Camping Unit and Revenue Reports

[Info Item: Parks]

Jeff VanMeeteren, Director of Parks & Recreation, presented the March monthly and year-to-date report numbers for the Division of Parks & Recreation related to camping units and revenue. March camping units were up 54% for the month and 45% YTD. The Parks Division revenue was down 1% overall for the month of March but is up 1% YTD. Annual park license sales remain very strong especially double license sales that have been promoted this spring to customers making camping reservations. The 3-year historical comparisons indicating revenue and permit sales were shared along with data on lodging and camping units.

### 25. Adjourn

[Action Item]

A Regular Commission Meeting will be held on May 7-8 at the Custer State Park Event Barn, Custer, SD starting at 1 pm MT.

MOTIONED BY CULL, SECONDED BY BARTLING TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 10:00 AM CST ON April 10, 2026. Motion carried unanimously.

Submitted respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kevin Robling".

Kevin Robling, Department Secretary

# GAME, FISH, AND PARKS COMMISSION ACTION FINALIZATION

## Black Hills (Firearm) Elk Hunting Season Chapter 41:06:26

<b>Commission Meeting Dates:</b>	<b>Proposal</b> <b>Public Hearing</b> <b>Finalization</b>	<b>April 9-10, 2026</b> <b>May 7, 2026</b> <b>May 7-8, 2026</b>	<b>Pierre</b> <b>Custer State Park</b> <b>Custer State Park</b>
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### COMMISSION PROPOSAL

**Duration of Proposal:** 2026 and 2027 hunting seasons

**Season Dates:** See Figure 1 for map.

Black Hills Elk Units (BHE)	Season Dates
Any Elk: H1A, H2A, H3A, H4A, H5A, H7A, H9A	Oct 1 - 31
<u>Antlerless Elk: H4B</u>	<u>Oct 1 – 31 AND Dec 1- 16</u>
Antlerless Elk: H1B, <del>H4B</del> , H7B, and H9B	Oct 15 - 31 AND Dec 1 - 16
Antlerless Elk: H2B, H2E, H2H, H3B, and H3E	Oct 15 - 31
Antlerless Elk: H2C, H2F, H2I, H3C and H3F	Dec 1 - 16
Antlerless Elk: H2G, H2J, H3D, and H3G	Dec 17 - 31

**Requirements and Restrictions:**

1. No person may possess more than one (1) elk license of any type in a year.
2. No more than two persons may submit applications together.
3. Except for landowner/operator preference applicants, no person who receives a license in the first drawing or by using preference points for this season shall be eligible to apply for a Black Hills (firearm) elk license in first drawings for next nine years.
4. One-half of the licenses allocated in each unit are available for landowner/operator preference application. Only one member of each qualifying landowner/operator household may apply every year.
5. Any elk that is harvested must be inspected by a Department representative within 24 hours after kill.

**Changes from last year (no recommended changes from proposal):**

- 1) Modify § 41:06:26:01 to increase the season length in Unit BHE-4B from Oct 15 – 31 AND Dec 1 – 16 to Oct 1 – 31 AND Dec 1 – 16.

### SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

Petition number 251 was received on March 19, 2026 requesting to include the cow elk season (Unit BHE-4B) with the bull elk season (Unit BHE-4B) at the beginning of October. The administrative rule change would increase the season length for antlerless elk licenses in Unit BHE-4B by adding two weeks to the beginning of the season, Oct. 1 – 14 and overlapping with the start of the any elk license season (Unit BHE-4A).

Figure 1. Map of Black Hills elk season hunting units for “any elk” license types (left panel) and units for “antlerless elk” license types (right panel).

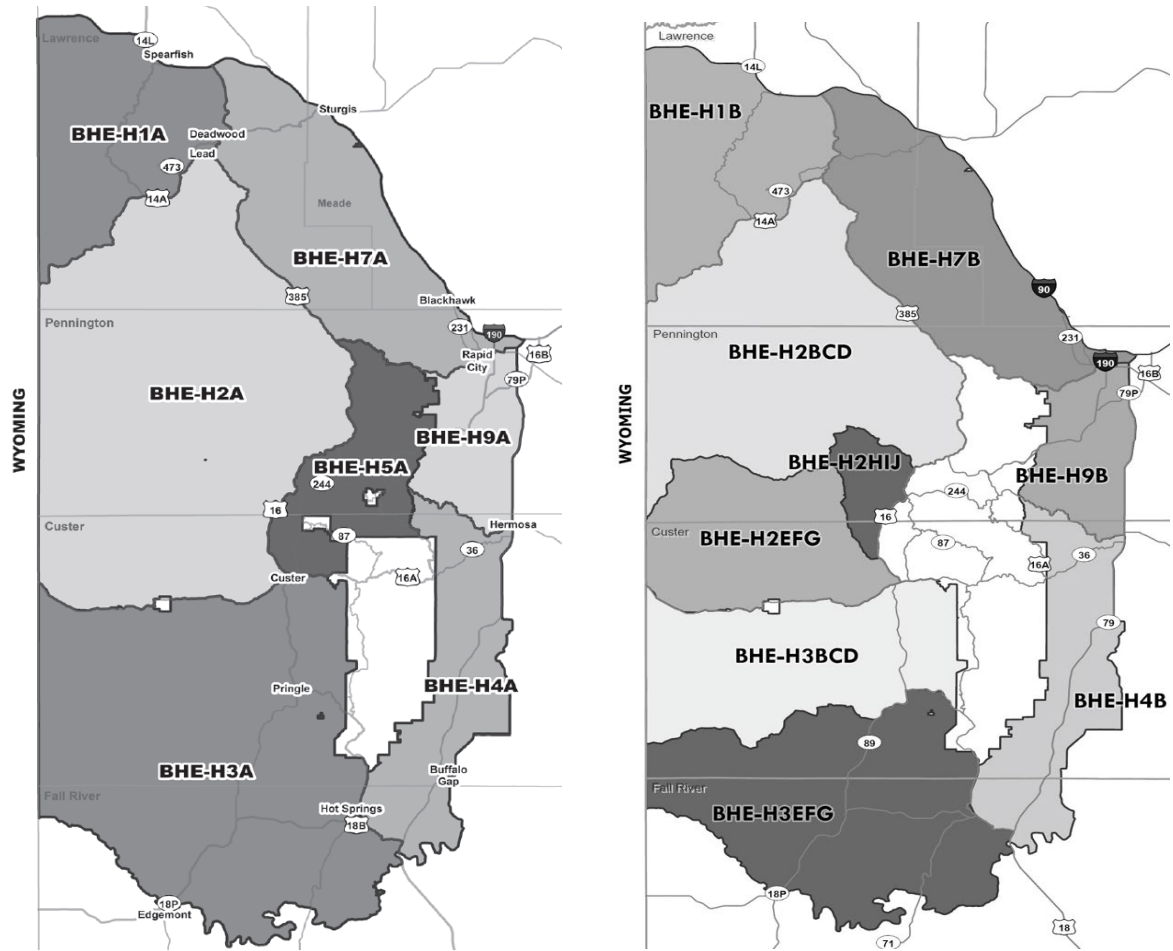


Table 1. Number of elk hunters, applicants, harvest success, and elk harvested by year during the Black Hills firearm elk season.

Year	Licensed Hunters	Applicants	Harvest Success Rate	Bulls Harvested	Cows Harvested
2014	664	11,461	71%	295	178
2015	922	12,126	71%	312	345
2016	1,745	12,692	62%	363	724
2017	1,581	12,201	66%	364	682
2018	1,124	11,871	64%	315	402
2019	1,108	12,396	62%	332	354
2020	926	13,198	63%	360	224
2021	954	12,656	65%	370	249
2022	1,265	13,447	64%	426	381
2023	1,232	12,999	63%	435	344
2024	1,290	13,742	61%	427	355
2025	1,865	13,471	62%	487	676

**DRAFT ADMINISTRATIVE RULE CHANGES**

41:06:26:01. Black Hills elk hunting season established -- Number and type of licenses -- Season dates. The Black Hills elk hunting season is open from one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset each day of the season. No more than eight hundred "any elk" licenses and no more than one thousand, five hundred "antlerless elk" licenses may be issued for the Black Hills elk hunting season. The Black Hills elk hunting ~~seasons~~ season dates are as follows:

- (1) Units BHE-H1A, BHE-H2A, BHE-H3A, BHE-H4A, BHE-H5A, BHE-H7A, and BHE-H9A are open from October first through October thirty-first;
- (2) Units BHE-H1B, ~~BHE-H4B~~, BHE-H7B, and BHE-H9B are open from October fifteenth through October thirty-first and from December first through December sixteenth;
- (3) Units BHE-H2B, BHE-H2E, BHE-H2H, BHE-H3B, and BHE-H3E are open from October fifteenth through October thirty-first;
- (4) Units BHE-H2C, BHE-H2F, BHE-H2I, BHE-H3C, and BHE-H3F are open from December first through December sixteenth; ~~and~~
- (5) Units BHE-H2D, BHE-H2G, BHE-H2J, BHE-H3D, and BHE-H3G are open from December seventeenth through December thirty-first; ~~and~~
- (6) Unit BHE-H4B is open from October first through October thirty-first and from December first through December sixteenth.

**RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT CRITERIA**

None

**RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, REACTIVATION (R3) CRITERIA**

- 1. Does the regulation or fee inhibit a user's ability to participate? No
- 2. Does the regulation increase the opportunity for new and existing users? Yes, an additional two weeks of hunting opportunity will be provided for antlerless elk hunters.
- 3. How does the regulation impact the next generation of hunters, anglers, trappers, and outdoor recreationists? More hunting opportunities.
- 4. Does the regulation enhance the quality of life for current and future generations by getting families outdoors? Yes

**FISCAL IMPACT**

None

APPROVE	_____	MODIFY	_____	REJECT	_____	NO ACTION	_____
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# GAME, FISH, AND PARKS COMMISSION ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

## Deer Hunting Season License Types

Chapter 41:06:19, 41:06:20, 41:06:21, 41:06:22, 41:06:36, 41:06:41, 41:06:44, 41:06:45, 41:06:63

<b>Commission Meeting Dates:</b>	Public Hearing Finalization	May 7, 2026 May 7-8, 2026	Custer State Park Custer State Park
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### SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

With an objective to increase deer numbers, particularly in southeast South Dakota, the following recommendations would result in changing archery and muzzleloader deer licenses from “any deer” to “any buck deer” license types and reducing East River Deer tags by 700 (4%) for “any deer”, “any buck deer”, and “any whitetail deer” in twelve hunting units.

In addition, the following recommendation would reduce West River Deer tags by 600 (3%) for “antlerless whitetail deer” in two hunting units.

### COMMISSION ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

#### ARCHERY, LANDOWNER-OWN-LAND, AND MUZZLELOADING DEER LICENSE TYPES

Unit	Area	License Type
ARD-ST1	Statewide Archery	Any Buck Deer
ARD-ER1	East River Archery	Any Buck Deer
ARD-WR1	West River Archery	Any Buck Deer
ARD-LM1	Designated Archery Units	Antlerless Whitetail
ARD-MP1	Custer Archery	Antlerless Deer
ARD-MP2	Rapid City Archery	Antlerless Deer
ARD-MP3	Sioux Falls and surrounding area Archery	Antlerless Deer
ARD-MP4	Closed Archery	Closed
MZD-ST1	Statewide Muzzleloader	Any Buck Deer
MZD-LM1	Designated Muzzleloader Units	Antlerless Whitetail
LED-ER1	East River Landowner-Own-Land	Any Deer or Any Deer and Any Antlerless Deer
LWD-WR1	West River Landowner-Own-Land	Any Deer or Any Deer and Any Antlerless Deer
LBD-BH1	Black Hills Landowner-Own-Land	Any Deer or Any Deer and Any Antlerless Deer

**2026 EAST RIVER DEER**

Unit #	Unit Name	Resident Licenses				Totals
		Any Deer 01	Any Buck 02	Any Whitetail 11	Antlerless Whitetail 13	RES Tags
01A	Minnehaha	300				300
03A	Brown	600			300	900
04A	Beadle			450		450
05A	Codington	400			200	600
06A	Brookings	400			100	500
07A	Yankton		50			50
07B	Yankton					0
08A	Davison		50			50
10A	Aurora			200		200
12A	Bon Homme		50			50
12B	Bon Homme					0
13A	Brule	50		500		550
13L	Brule	20				20
14A	Buffalo	50		150		200
16A	Campbell	30		350		380
17A	Charles Mix			200		200
18A	Clark	600			200	800
19A	Clay		50			50
22A	Day	600			300	900
23A	Deuel	500			100	600
25A	Douglas			150		150
26A	Edmunds	500			200	700
28A	Faulk	600			400	1000
29A	Grant	400			100	500
32A	Hamlin	600			100	700
33A	Hand	10		300		310
34A	Hanson		100			100
36A	Hughes	150		250		400
37A	Hutchinson		50			50
38A	Hyde	10		300		310
40A	Jerauld			200		200
42A	Kingsbury	500			200	700
43A	Lake	300			100	400
44A	Lincoln		50			50
46A	McCook	200				200
47A	McPherson	500			400	900
48A	Marshall	500			50	550
51A	Miner	400			350	750
52A	Moody	300			100	400
54A	Potter	50		400		450
55A	Roberts	500			50	550
56A	Sanborn			150		150
57A	Spink	700			200	900
59A	Sully	100		75		175
59B	Sully	20		75		95
61A	Turner		50			50
62A	Union		50			50
63A	Walworth	50		400	100	550
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9,940</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>4,150</b>	<b>3,550</b>	<b>18,140</b>

**EAST RIVER DEER 2025 vs. 2026 Comparison**

<b>Unit #</b>	<b>Unit Name</b>	<b>2025 Resident Tags</b>	<b>2026 Resident Tags</b>	<b># Change</b>	<b>% Change</b>
01A	Minnehaha	400	300	-100	-25%
03A	Brown	900	900	0	0%
04A	Beadle	450	450	0	0%
05A	Codington	600	600	0	0%
06A	Brookings	500	500	0	0%
07A	Yankton	100	50	-50	-50%
07B	Yankton	0	0	0	NA
08A	Davison	100	50	-50	-50%
10A	Aurora	200	200	0	0%
12A	Bon Homme	100	50	-50	-50%
12B	Bon Homme	0	0	0	NA
13A	Brule	550	550	0	0%
13L	Brule	20	20	0	0%
14A	Buffalo	200	200	0	0%
16A	Campbell	380	380	0	0%
17A	Charles Mix	200	200	0	0%
18A	Clark	800	800	0	0%
19A	Clay	100	50	-50	-50%
22A	Day	900	900	0	0%
23A	Deuel	600	600	0	0%
25A	Douglas	150	150	0	0%
26A	Edmunds	700	700	0	0%
28A	Faulk	1,000	1,000	0	0%
29A	Grant	500	500	0	0%
32A	Hamlin	700	700	0	0%
33A	Hand	310	310	0	0%
34A	Hanson	150	100	-50	-33%
36A	Hughes	400	400	0	0%
37A	Hutchinson	100	50	-50	-50%
38A	Hyde	310	310	0	0%
40A	Jerauld	200	200	0	0%
42A	Kingsbury	700	700	0	0%
43A	Lake	400	400	0	0%
44A	Lincoln	100	50	-50	-50%
46A	McCook	250	200	-50	-20%
47A	McPherson	900	900	0	0%
48A	Marshall	550	550	0	0%
51A	Miner	750	750	0	0%
52A	Moody	400	400	0	0%
54A	Potter	450	450	0	0%
55A	Roberts	550	550	0	0%
56A	Sanborn	250	150	-100	-40%
57A	Spink	900	900	0	0%
59A	Sully	175	175	0	0%
59B	Sully	95	95	0	0%
61A	Turner	100	50	-50	-50%
62A	Union	100	50	-50	-50%
63A	Walworth	550	550	0	0%
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18,840</b>	<b>18,140</b>	<b>-700</b>	<b>-4%</b>

2026 WEST RIVER DEER

Unit #	Unit Name	Resident Licenses													Nonresident Licenses													
		AnyD 01	AnyB 02	AtID 03	AtID 03P	AD+AtID 08	2 AtID 09P	AnyW 11	AtIW 13	AtIW 13P	3 AtIW 17P	AW+AtIW 18	2 AtIW 19	2 AtIW 19P	AnyD 01	AnyD 02	AtID 03	AtID 03P	AD+AtID 08	2 AtID 09P	AnyW 11	AtIW 13	AtIW 13P	3 AtIW 17P	AW+AtIW 18	2 AtIW 19	2 AtIW 19P	
02A	Pennington	400								50			200			32	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	16	0	0
02C	Pennington		100							25						0	8	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
11A	Bennett		125							50						0	10	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
11B	Bennett		25							50						0	2	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
15A	Butte	200											600		500	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	48	0	40	
15B	Butte	150											400		200	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	32	0	16	
20A	Corson	200		50						350						16	0	4	0	0	0	28	0	0	0	0	0	0
21A	Custer		100							200		50				0	8	0	0	0	0	16	0	4	0	0	0	0
21B	Custer	50								50						4	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
24A	Dewey	100								250	100					8	0	0	0	0	0	20	8	0	0	0	0	0
24B	Little Moreau									10	10					0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
27A	Fall River		100							50	25					0	8	0	0	0	0	4	0	2	0	0	0	0
27B	Fall River		200							100	50					0	16	0	0	0	0	8	0	4	0	0	0	0
27L	Fall River		5							10						0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
30A	Gregory									450	100					0	0	0	0	0	0	36	0	8	0	0	0	0
30B	Gregory									450	100					0	0	0	0	0	0	36	0	8	0	0	0	0
31A	Haakon	600			100	75							100	150		48	0	0	8	6	0	0	0	0	8	12	0	
35A	Harding	275								75			50		75	22	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	4	0	6	
35C	Harding	200			50					75			50		75	16	0	0	4	0	0	6	0	0	4	0	6	
35L	Harding	75								25						6	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
39A	Jackson	175								50	50					14	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	4	0	0	0	0
39B	Jackson	275								50	50					22	0	0	0	0	0	4	4	0	0	0	0	0
41A	Jones	200								200						16	0	0	0	0	0	16	0	0	0	0	0	0
45A	Lyman	100								350						8	0	0	0	0	0	28	0	0	0	0	0	0
45B	Lyman	50								175						4	0	0	0	0	0	14	0	0	0	0	0	0
45C	Lyman	30									20					3	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
45D	Lyman	30								50						3	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
49A	Meade	500								250	150					40	0	0	0	0	0	20	12	0	0	0	0	0
49B	Meade	600								100						48	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0
50A	Mellette	150								400						12	0	0	0	0	0	32	0	0	0	0	0	0
53A	Perkins	400							100				250		100	32	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	20	0	8
53C	Perkins	500							100	250	100					40	0	0	0	0	8	20	0	8	0	0	0	0
58A	Stanley	150											150			12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	0	0	
58D	Stanley	5									3					1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
60A	Tripp	50								600						4	0	0	0	0	0	48	0	0	0	0	0	0
64A	Ziebach	250								75					50	20	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	4
65A	Oglala Lakota		75													0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
67A	Todd	75								75						6	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5,790</b>	<b>730</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>4,845</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>525</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,800</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>465</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>388</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>80</b>	

**WEST RIVER DEER 2025 vs. 2026 Comparison**

Unit #	Unit Name	2025 Resident Licenses	2026 Resident Licenses	# Change	% Change	2025 Resident Tags	2026 Resident Tags	# Change	% Change
02A	Pennington	650	650	0	0%	850	850	0	0%
02C	Pennington	125	125	0	0%	125	125	0	0%
11A	Bennett	175	175	0	0%	175	175	0	0%
11B	Bennett	75	75	0	0%	75	75	0	0%
15A	Butte	1,300	1,300	0	0%	2,400	2,400	0	0%
15B	Butte	750	750	0	0%	1,350	1,350	0	0%
20A	Corson	600	600	0	0%	600	600	0	0%
21A	Custer	350	350	0	0%	350	350	0	0%
21B	Custer	100	100	0	0%	100	100	0	0%
24A	Dewey	450	450	0	0%	450	450	0	0%
24B	Little Moreau	20	20	0	0%	20	20	0	0%
27A	Fall River	175	175	0	0%	175	175	0	0%
27B	Fall River	350	350	0	0%	350	350	0	0%
27L	Fall River	15	15	0	0%	15	15	0	0%
30A	Gregory	550	550	0	0%	550	550	0	0%
30B	Gregory	550	550	0	0%	550	550	0	0%
31A	Haakon	1,025	1,025	0	0%	1,350	1,350	0	0%
35A	Harding	475	475	0	0%	600	600	0	0%
35C	Harding	450	450	0	0%	575	575	0	0%
35L	Harding	100	100	0	0%	100	100	0	0%
39A	Jackson	275	275	0	0%	275	275	0	0%
39B	Jackson	375	375	0	0%	375	375	0	0%
41A	Jones	400	400	0	0%	400	400	0	0%
45A	Lyman	450	450	0	0%	450	450	0	0%
45B	Lyman	225	225	0	0%	225	225	0	0%
45C	Lyman	50	50	0	0%	50	50	0	0%
45D	Lyman	80	80	0	0%	80	80	0	0%
49A	Meade	900	900	0	0%	1,150	900	-250	-22%
49B	Meade	700	700	0	0%	700	700	0	0%
50A	Mellette	550	550	0	0%	550	550	0	0%
53A	Perkins	850	850	0	0%	1,300	1,300	0	0%
53C	Perkins	950	950	0	0%	1,400	1,050	-350	-25%
58A	Stanley	300	300	0	0%	450	450	0	0%
58D	Stanley	8	8	0	0%	8	8	0	0%
60A	Tripp	650	650	0	0%	650	650	0	0%
64A	Ziebach	375	375	0	0%	425	425	0	0%
65A	Oglala Lakota	75	75	0	0%	75	75	0	0%
67A	Todd	150	150	0	0%	150	150	0	0%
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15,648</b>	<b>15,648</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>19,473</b>	<b>18,873</b>	<b>-600</b>	<b>-3%</b>

Note: An additional 8% of the number of licenses will be available to nonresidents.

APPROVE \_\_\_\_\_ MODIFY \_\_\_\_\_ REJECT \_\_\_\_\_ NO ACTION \_\_\_\_\_



# GAME, FISH, AND PARKS COMMISSION ACTION PROPOSAL

## Apprentice, Mentored, and Youth Deer Hunting Seasons

Chapter 41:06:01, 41:06:44, 41:06:63

<b>Commission Meeting Dates:</b>	<b>Proposal</b>	<b>May 8, 2026</b>	<b>Custer State Park</b>
	<b>Public Hearing</b>	<b>June 11, 2026</b>	<b>Madison</b>
	<b>Finalization</b>	<b>June 11-12, 2026</b>	<b>Madison</b>

### RECOMMENDED CHANGES

**Duration:** 2026 hunting seasons

**Season Dates:** September 12, 2026 – January 1, 2027

**Open Units:** Unit APD-03 (Apprentice) and YOD-03 (Youth): West River Units 02A, 15A, 15B, 31A, 35A, 35C, 35L, 49A, 49B, 53A, 53C and 64A (See map for open area)\*

Unit APD-13 and YOD-13: That portion of the state not included in Unit APD-03 and YOD-03 (See map for open area)\*

*\*Department recommendation to close Apprentice, Mentored, and Youth Deer Hunting in nine hunting units.*

An individual with a Mentored Youth Deer (MHD) license shall adhere to date, weapon, and unit restrictions for the Youth Deer Season.

Custer State Park and National Wildlife Refuges, unless specified by the refuge, are closed to those with an Apprentice, Mentored, or Youth Deer Hunting License.

**Licenses:** Unit APD-03, MHD-03, and YOD-03: Single tag “any antlerless deer” license  
Unit APD-13, MHD-13, and YOD-13: Single tag “antlerless whitetail deer” license

### **Requirements and Restrictions:**

#### 1. Apprentice

- a. Any resident hunter who has not held a license to hunt deer during the previous 10 years may purchase an Apprentice Hunter Deer License. Receipt of an Apprentice Hunter Deer License does not affect eligibility for a license in any other season.
- b. Hunters may purchase one Apprentice Hunter Deer License valid for either Unit APD-03 or Unit APD-13.

#### 2. Youth

- a. Both residents and nonresidents who have reached the age of 12 years by September and have not reached the age of 18 years by June 30; and any person who has not received a Mentored Hunter Deer License may purchase a Youth Deer License. Successful applicants for the Youth Deer License are not eligible for the Mentored Hunter Deer License.
- b. Each hunter under 16 years old must be accompanied by an adult while hunting.

- c. Hunters may purchase one Youth Deer Hunting License valid for either Unit YOD-03 or Unit YOD-13.
3. Mentored
- a. Both residents and nonresidents with a Mentored Hunter license may not apply for or purchase another deer hunting license.
  - b. Mentee must purchase hunting license to hunt species and season.
  - c. Mentee must be fifteen years old or younger and accompanied by the child's parent, guardian, or other adult 18 years of age or older who has the consent of the child's parent or guardian, hereafter hunting mentor.
  - d. Mentee must be under the immediate physical, direct supervision, and responsibility of a hunting mentor, at the time the child discharges a firearm or operates a bow and arrow in the act of hunting.
  - e. Hunting mentor must be unarmed; except they may possess a concealed pistol or other legally possessed handgun.
  - f. Hunting mentor shall have successfully completed hunter safety or hunter education course (SDCL 41-7).
  - g. Hunting mentor may accompany no more than one mentee at any one time.
  - h. Mentees may purchase one Mentored Deer Hunting License valid for either Unit YOD-03 or Unit YOD-13.

**Changes from last year:**

- 1) Modify § 41:06:44 and § 41:06:63 to remove nine East River Deer Hunting units from the APD-13 and YOD-13 open unit. The following units would be removed: 07A/07B (Yankton), 08A (Davison), 12A/12B (Bon Homme), 19A (Clay), 34A (Hanson), 37A (Hutchinson), 44A (Lincoln), 61A (Turner), and 62A (Union). This will also result in a Mentored Deer (MHD-13) Hunting Season closure in these units.

**SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION**

Reports from the public, harvest estimates, and recruitment data for white-tailed deer in nine southeastern South Dakota hunting units suggest low deer numbers based on a severe winter, flooding, drought and multiple years of deer deaths reported as a result of hemorrhagic disease. Deer population objectives are to significantly increase in these areas.

With the expected female deer harvest from Apprentice, Mentored, and Youth deer hunters, the population is not expected to increase at population objective levels. In addition to East River Deer firearm license reductions in twelve units, a season closure for Apprentice, Mentored, and Youth Deer seasons is recommended in nine units. Among these nine units, the female deer harvest from the Apprentice, Mentored, and Youth Deer seasons was 255 in 2025 and accounted for 73% of the total female harvest.

Figure 1. Map of the recommended Youth Deer Hunting units YOD-03 and YOD-13. Mentored Deer, MHD-03 and MHD-13, and Apprentice Deer, APD-03 and APD-13, hunting units are the same as YOD-03 and YOD-13, respectively. The Department recommendation is to close the Youth, Mentor, and Apprentice Deer seasons in nine southeastern South Dakota hunting units.

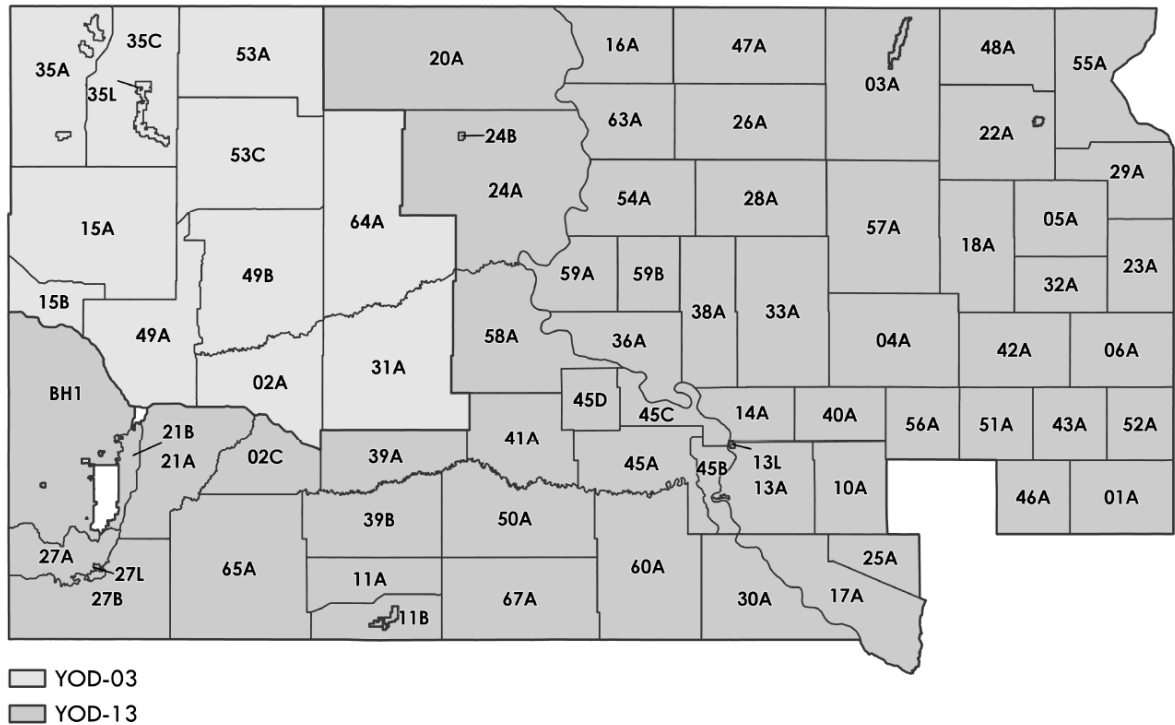


Table 1. Apprentice Deer Hunting season hunter and harvest information from 2018 to 2025.

YEAR	Licenses Sold	Harvest						Avg Days Hunted	Average Satisfctn
		Bucks		Does		Total	Success		
		WT	Mule	WT	Mule				
2018	4,845	264	35	1,823	377	2,499	52%	3.85	5.72
2019	4,424	263	37	1,722	297	2,319	52%	3.93	5.70
2020	4,302	249	26	1,846	372	2,493	58%	3.71	5.73
2021	641	21	0	323	18	362	57%	3.09	6.10
2022	527	29	4	210	22	263	50%	4.10	5.82
2023	653	36	3	292	29	361	55%	4.27	5.69
2024	567	25	6	276	12	318	56%	4.38	5.65
2025	487	27	3	233	23	287	59%	3.76	5.88

\*The Apprentice season was separated into Youth and Apprentice seasons in 2021. See separate Youth season report for license sales and estimated harvest.

Table 2. Youth Deer Hunting season hunter and harvest information from 2016 to 2025.

YEAR	Licenses Sold	Harvest						Avg Days Hunted	Average Satisfctn
		Bucks		Does		Total	Success		
		WT	Mule	WT	Mule				
2016	4,861	322	29	1,896	324	2,571	53%	4.15	5.65
2017	5,325	292	35	2,072	426	2,825	53%	4.17	5.65
2018-20	Modified into Apprentice Deer season								
2021	3,812	175	8	1,523	156	1,861	49%	3.89	5.57
2022	3,448	151	4	1,282	235	1,672	48%	4.08	5.38
2023	3,286	145	3	1,191	121	1,460	44%	4.82	5.05
2024	3,253	137	7	1,222	104	1,471	45%	4.77	4.96
2025	3,049	168	7	1,214	96	1,484	49%	4.11	5.20

\* The Youth season was modified into the Apprentice season in 2018 and then separated from the Apprentice season in 2021. See Apprentice season report for license sales and estimated harvest for that season.

Table 3. Mentored Deer Hunting season hunter and harvest information from 2016 to 2025.

YEAR	Licenses Sold	Harvest				Total	Success	Avg Days Hunted	Average Satisfctn
		Bucks		Does					
		WT	Mule	WT	Mule				
2016	3,646	287	30	1,495	301	2,114	58%	3.56	5.85
2017	4,069	230	31	1,567	320	2,147	53%	3.78	5.83
2018	5,357	324	51	2,335	439	2,824	53%	3.61	5.89
2019	5,715	348	45	2,123	417	2,932	51%	3.52	5.79
2020	6,387	371	21	2,772	472	3,636	57%	3.77	5.77
2021	6,207	301	5	2,446	226	2,977	48%	3.92	5.69
2022	6,723	320	5	2,525	301	3,150	47%	3.88	5.59
2023	6,985	328	2	2,630	225	3,185	46%	4.08	5.24
2024	7,003	303	18	2,825	253	3,398	49%	4.32	5.21
2025	4,777	245	16	2,251	230	2,742	57%	3.58	5.53

### DRAFT ADMINISTRATIVE RULE CHANGES

41:06:44:02. Number and type of licenses available. An unlimited number of antlerless deer and antlerless whitetail deer licenses may be issued for the apprentice hunter deer hunting season. An apprentice hunter limited to one antlerless deer or antlerless whitetail deer license for areas open to the apprentice hunter deer hunting season. The following describes the open units:

(1) Unit APD-03: West River Units 02A, 15A, 15B, 31A, 35A, 35C, 35L, 49A, 49B, 53A, 53C, and 64A. Only a single tag any antlerless deer license is valid in this unit; and

(2) Unit APD-13: That portion of the state not included in Unit APD-03 and excluding East River Units 07A, 07B, 08A, 12A, 12B, 19A, 34A, 37A, 44A, 61A, and 62A. Only a single tag antlerless whitetail deer license is valid in this unit.

41:06:63:03. Open units. The following is a description of the open units:

(1) Unit YOD-03: West River Units 02A, 15A, 15B, 31A, 35A, 35C, 35L, 49A, 49B, 53A, 53C, and 64A. Only a single tag ~~"any antlerless deer"~~ any antlerless deer license is valid in this unit.

(2) Unit YOD-13: That portion of the state not included in Unit YOD-03 and excluding East River Units 07A, 07B, 08A, 12A, 12B, 19A, 34A, 37A, 44A, 61A, and 62A. Only a single tag ~~"antlerless whitetail deer"~~ antlerless whitetail deer license is valid in this unit.

### RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT CRITERIA

None.

### RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, REACTIVATION (R3) CRITERIA

1. Does the regulation or fee inhibit a user's ability to participate? The hunting unit is reduced.
2. Does the regulation increase the opportunity for new and existing users? No.
3. How does the regulation impact the next generation of hunters, anglers, trappers, and outdoor recreationists? Hunters for these seasons in the closed unit will need to hunt in different areas. Hunters are taught conservation of the resource during low deer populations.
4. Does the regulation enhance the quality of life for current and future generations by getting families outdoors? Yes.

### FISCAL IMPACT

Fewer licenses may be sold because of the unit reduction in size.

APPROVE \_\_\_\_\_ MODIFY \_\_\_\_\_ REJECT \_\_\_\_\_ NO ACTION \_\_\_\_\_

# **SOUTH DAKOTA ELK ACTION PLAN 2026-2030**



**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF GAME, FISH AND PARKS  
PIERRE, SOUTH DAKOTA**

**WILDLIFE DIVISION REPORT 2025-11**

**MAY 2026**

This action plan will be used by South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) staff on an annual basis and will be formally evaluated at least every five years. Plan updates and changes, however, may occur more frequently as needed. All text and data contained within this document are subject to revision for corrections, updates, and data analyses.

A supportive document to this action plan, the “Management of Elk in South Dakota”, provides a historical background, research, management surveys and monitoring, challenges and opportunities, and citizen involvement related to elk and can be found at <https://gfp.sd.gov/management-plans/>. Additionally, biennial population status updates for elk in South Dakota are available at <https://gfp.sd.gov/elk/> under “Related Documents”.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

This plan is a product of substantial discussion, evaluation, and input from many wildlife professionals, constituents, and the 2025 South Dakota Elk Stakeholder Group. In addition, comments and suggestions received from private landowners, hunters, and those who recognize the value of elk and their associated habitats were also considered.

Action Plan Coordinators – Andy Lindbloom and Byron Buckley, GFP.

GFP Elk Action Plan Team that assisted with plan writing, data review and analyses, critical reviews and/or edits – Nathan Baker, Stephanie Buckley, Steve Griffin, Trenton Haffley, John Kanta, Julie Lindstrom, Andrew Norton, Dan Sternhagen, Chad Switzer, and Lauren Wiechmann.

Those who served on the South Dakota Elk Stakeholder Group during this planning process included: Travis Bies (GFP Commissioner); Sean Fulton (Black Hills Sportsmen Club); Jeff Olson (South Dakota Wildlife Federation); Bill Paulton (South Dakota Stockgrowers Association); Todd Russell (United States Forest Service); Sam Silacci (Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation); Carson Sleep (Spearfish Livestock Association); Andrew Snyder (South Dakota Cattlemen’s Association); Travis Theel (GFP Commissioner).

## **Recommended Citation:**

South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks. 2026. South Dakota Elk Action Plan 2026–2030. Completion Report 2025-11. South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks, Pierre, South Dakota, USA.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The elk (*Cervus elaphus*) is the largest hunted member of the deer family (Cervidae) residing in South Dakota. Prior to European settlement, elk once ranged over the entire state of South Dakota but were extirpated by the late 1800s due to unregulated harvest and market hunting. Cooperative transplant efforts between western state and federal agencies began in the early 1900s to re-introduce elk into the Black Hills of South Dakota.

The re-establishment of elk in South Dakota is a wildlife management success story. Today several thousand wild elk roam free, primarily in the Black Hills forested region along with several smaller herds occupying prairie and agricultural landscapes. Public demand for elk hunting and viewing opportunities is strong and continues to increase. According to a public opinion survey completed in 2020 (Wolter 2020), only 25% of elk hunters and 12% of landowners would prefer GFP change the current winter elk population objective for Black Hills Elk. Among hunters and landowners that preferred a change to the elk population objective for the Black Hills, 87% of hunters and 58% of landowners preferred an increase in the population objective.

The “*South Dakota Elk Action Plan 2026-2030*” will serve as the guiding document for implementation of actions to ensure elk populations and their habitats are managed appropriately, addressing both biological and social tolerances, while considering the needs of all stakeholders. This plan is intended to guide managers and biologists over the next 5 years but should be considered a working document that will be amended as new biological and social data provide opportunities to improve management of elk resources in South Dakota. Additional information and historical data are included in the “*Management of Elk in South Dakota*” (South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks, 2021). Furthermore, status updates on elk populations are produced biennially for the GFP commission, staff, and all interested constituents (Lindbloom et al. 2024).

## **MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES**

### **Habitat and Access Management**

Quantity and quality of elk habitat in the Black Hills affects elk herd distribution, abundance, and productivity. A healthy, productive, and sustainable elk herd requires quality habitat throughout the year. Any loss or degradation of existing elk habitat in the Black Hills may result in a reduction in elk numbers. Unfortunately, elk habitat in the Black Hills is continuing to be impacted and fragmented by a variety of causes, including human development and expansion. Additionally, the high density of roads in BHNF results in high disturbance to elk and their habitat. Off-highway vehicle (OHV) use has recently been restricted to designated areas instead of forest-wide; however, enforcement is insufficient and participation in OHV use has increased substantially in recent years.

Forest management practices such as logging, timber thinning, and prescribed burning can either help maintain, enhance, or degrade elk habitat, depending on forest management objectives. Silviculture and vegetation treatments that move a large percentage of even-aged forest to a more diverse pine ecosystem are opportunities to enhance and create habitats for a variety of wildlife, including elk. Recently a significant emphasis has been placed on cutting and thinning pine trees on both public and private lands to reduce the wildfire threats and address mountain pine beetle (MPB) infestations. While opening the forest canopy and reducing tree density improves the growth of understory vegetation and big game forage, additional pine mortality due to insects, disease, weather events, and fire have been substantial in recent years. Coupled with the current timber harvesting emphasis on opening pine canopies and basal areas to 40% or less (Graham et al. 2021), the overall impact these habitat changes will have on elk populations in the Black Hills warrants additional research.

Grazing management on public and private land in the Black Hills, like forest management, can either benefit or degrade elk habitat. Most rangeland in the Black Hills is subjected to annual livestock grazing, with the timing, intensity, distribution, and duration greatly affecting forage quality and quantity available to elk. Grazing practices that consider the habitat needs of elk can be beneficial by rejuvenating areas with decadent vegetation. However, grazing practices that give little or no consideration to elk habitat conditions can result in removal of much needed forage, and a general degradation of habitat quality and quantity. Some rangeland management activities used to benefit grazing practices, such as water developments and fencing, can also indirectly impact elk habitat quality and quantity by affecting rotational cattle grazing practices.

Prescribed burning can also affect elk habitat, depending on timing, intensity, size, weather, and the habitat being treated. If enhancing elk habitat was an objective during a prescribed fire project design, forage quality, quantity, and beneficial cover can be greatly improved. Prescribed burns, both in forest or rangeland habitats, will remove overgrown, decadent vegetation, and create openings that can improve elk forage. However, fire results in short-term impacts to browse and forage. Further, poorly timed fires, drought, and invasive weeds can result in less desirable vegetative response overall.

Hunter access to elk in South Dakota, particularly outside of the Black Hills, is critical for effective elk management since the majority of land in South Dakota is privately owned. While GFP has several highly successful programs that create hunting access opportunities on private land, elk are unique enough that they warrant their own program. The GFP Elk Hunter Access Program opens nearly 100,000 acres of privately owned land to hunters possessing elk tags, a total that has more than doubled in the last 5 years.

## Population Surveys

The GFP conducts several surveys and assessments to better understand elk population abundance and trends in the Black Hills. Surveys are completed annually or periodically to assess harvest, disease, herd composition, reproduction, survival, and abundance.

Hunter surveys and mandatory elk check-ins are conducted annually to estimate harvest, hunter success and satisfaction, and harvested elk age structure. Harvest age thresholds were established in the South Dakota Elk Action Plan (South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks, 2021). Specifically, these thresholds were to manage Black Hills elk management units (firearm and archery combined) and CSP for an average minimum bull harvest age structure of 60% bulls 4+ years of age. These thresholds have been exceeded in all years since 2020 (Figure 1). Harvest ages are determined by an accurate and consistent aging technique (cementum annuli) at Matson's laboratory in Montana.

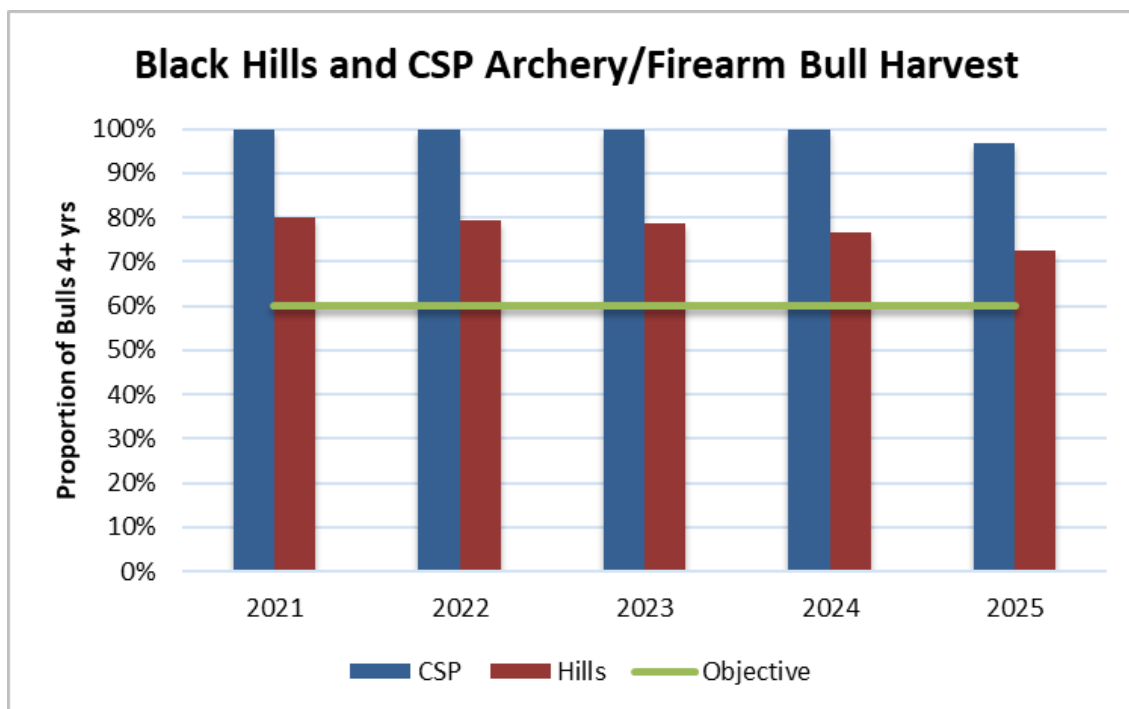


Figure 1. Proportion of harvested bulls that are 4+ years of age in the Black Hills and CSP, 2021-2025.

Herd composition surveys are completed annually and provide critical information on fall recruitment and bull to cow ratios of the elk herd. Periodic capture and radio collaring efforts provide an opportunity to gather important data on survival rates; monitoring of radio collared adult cow elk survival provides insights on the impacts of antlerless harvest rates and

population trends. In addition, herd composition data and survival estimates are used for annually projecting elk populations between abundance surveys.

Sightability surveys are completed every four years (if adequate snow conditions exist) and provide periodic abundance estimates of wintering elk herds, and important “anchor points” for population models. Aerial surveys completed in the winter of 2024/2025 resulted in an estimate of 7,922 (95% CI: 7,604-9,143) elk in the Black Hills and 765 (95% CI:754-846) elk in Custer State Park.

### **Depredation Program**

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks understands that cooperative partnerships with private landowners are an essential component to elk management and private lands serve an important role regarding elk management in South Dakota. The demand for elk damage abatement services fluctuates annually due to weather events (e.g., drought or harsh winters) and seasonal variation, elk populations, and changes to elk habitat (e.g., impacts of fires, agricultural development, logging practices, and human encroachment).

GFP has designed its elk damage abatement programs to address requests for assistance from private landowners. The most widely used program to address crop damage is cost-share assistance for growing-season food-plots. Landowners that have elk-use in alfalfa fields or other crop fields are eligible for up to \$8,000 of cost-share assistance to establish and manage these fields, annually. Additionally, producers experiencing elk-use on fields raised to produce grass hay are eligible for up to \$4,000 of cost-share assistance for maintenance of those fields. Another program that provides long-term solutions is the permanent stackyard (i.e., protective fencing) and protective panel program. For these programs, landowners are reimbursed for materials to construct a permanent stackyard or purchase protective panels, up to a maximum of \$15,000. Another program available to landowners is cost-share assistance for the replacement of fence materials because of damage caused by elk crossing fences. When elk cross barbed-wire fences, they can cause substantial damage to the fence (Bauman et al. 1999). GFP has utilized aircraft-grade aluminum cable strung along the top of fences to reduce the damage caused by elk when crossing the fence. This technique has proven successful if the area where the cable is applied has a fence in good condition with an adequate number of wooden posts. GFP also provides replacement posts and wire to cooperating landowners. Cooperating landowners are limited to \$15,000. Depending upon individual needs and available funding, some landowners may be eligible for multiple stackyard and/or fencing contracts over several years.

Finally, while grazing competition between livestock and elk exists in South Dakota, most hunters and landowners agree that it is possible to manage effectively for both. Longmire (2014) found that 82% of hunters and 80% of landowners agreed that it is possible to manage for both elk and livestock grazing in the Black Hills. Current elk depredation abatement programs do not address requests for assistance regarding grazing impacts to pastures or

meadows, under most circumstances. However, GFP has provided hazing devices (i.e., propane cannons and pyrotechnics) and technical assistance to landowners that have concerns of elk grazing on grasslands. If these conflicts occur near or during on-going hunting seasons, GFP will coordinate with landowners and hunters to increase harvest and hazing pressure in these areas.

## **Public Input**

Public participation is an important aspect of natural resource management and decision making. In addition to biological data, public participation is a crucial aspect in developing and implementing an elk management plan in South Dakota. It is an intentional process that seeks input to shape decisions, actions, impacts, or change. Meaningful public participation seeks to understand people's values, views, and perspectives. The process provides opportunities for the public to engage in the plan development across various stages of the revision, and the goal is to incorporate that input into decision-making. Successful public participation recognizes the diversity of stakeholders who may be interested in or affected by decision-making. It is relationship focused, and provides an opportunity to build trust, resolve conflicts, and inform the public about elk management in the state of South Dakota.

As part of the elk plan revision, the South Dakota Elk Stakeholder Group was held in the summer of 2025 to collect input on elk populations and their habitats. The group included representatives from the following groups: the U.S. Forest Service, the South Dakota Wildlife Federation, Black Hills Sportsmen, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, South Dakota Cattleman's Association, South Dakota Stockgrower's Association, and Spearfish Livestock Association. South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks commission members and staff were in attendance. Information and supportive data were presented by GFP staff to provide relevant knowledge about the topics and issues discussed by the group. Key topics and issues included the Black Hills population objective, bull age structure, hunter success, depredation, prairie elk harvest, hunter access, disease, and archery. Individual views and opinions varied amongst the groups represented. Careful consideration of the perceptions and opinions shared was incorporated into identifying the management objectives and strategies necessary to successfully manage elk in the state.

## **Tribal Cooperation**

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks recognize that wildlife, including elk, is an important component of tribal culture and sovereignty. Maintaining healthy populations of both game and non-game species ensures that tribes can provide their members with opportunities for hunting, viewing, and maintaining a cultural connection to the outdoors. Species such as elk also ensure that tribes have a local source of healthy, quality protein and can provide a step towards tribal food sovereignty, reducing their dependence on non-local food sources.

Wildlife species, including elk, do not recognize political boundaries and regularly move between tribal lands and private or public property under the jurisdiction of the State of South Dakota. These shared wildlife populations can create management challenges when the goals of the Tribe and the State do not fully align.

GFP staff meet annually with the tribes to discuss goals and management actions that will cooperatively meet the needs of the tribe, landowners, and the State to the greatest extent possible.

## **POPULATION OBJECTIVES**

The winter population objective for elk is 6,000-9,000 (2.1-3.0 elk/sq mi) in the Black Hills and 500-600 (4.5-5.5 elk/sq mi) in Custer State Park. The Black Hills elk population objective was based on a compromise between cattle grazing interests and elk hunting and viewing opportunities. The CSP elk population objective was established to maximize hunting and viewing opportunity while acknowledging CWD prevalence may increase at a faster rate when ungulate densities are higher (Sargeant et al. 2011, Jennelle et al. 2014). Actual population abundance and estimates may vary within these objective ranges depending on a multitude of factors such as range conditions, elk vital rates, predator densities, other ungulate densities, public input, and the precision and accuracy of biological monitoring. These population objectives were developed after thorough analyses of elk population data, available habitat resources on public land, private land depredation issues, recreational opportunities, and substantial input from a wide variety of publics with an interest in elk management in South Dakota (GFP 2021). GFP will adopt harvest strategies that allow the elk population to stay within these objective ranges. During periods of drought and subsequent low forage production that last more than one year, GFP will set harvest management strategies that move the elk population towards the lower end of the population objective range. Similarly, during periods of above normal precipitation and forage production, GFP will manage elk populations towards the upper end of the objective range.

Elk residing in the Black Hills are known migrators and often gather in large concentrations during winter months on established wintering grounds; approximately 68% of all elk estimated during 2025 aerial surveys were in Black Hills elk hunting Unit 2, which contains much of the Jasper fire burn area. Estimates of elk distribution in other seasons (i.e., spring, summer, fall) remain unknown, therefore individual elk management units are managed to increase, maintain, or decrease elk populations without specific population objectives. Management unit objective direction (Figure 2) is based on an annual collection and evaluation of biological data, habitat conditions, and social data.

Population objectives for prairie elk units are also specific to desired management unit objective direction and not specific densities. Most survey data are lacking for prairie units and elk densities are primarily managed to abate agricultural damages on private property. Except

for Harding County (units PRE-35A and PRE-35B), management unit objectives for all prairie units west of the Missouri River are to increase antlerless license numbers to a level that allows landowners the ability to manage elk at low densities, if they so desire (Figure 2). Due to a high proportion of public land and lower agricultural depredation concerns, population objective direction (decrease, maintain, increase) for Harding County will be evaluated biennially and antlerless license recommendations will be based on the population change objective. Dispersing elk that occur east of the Missouri River will be managed via liberal hunting regulations to prevent the establishment of any elk populations.

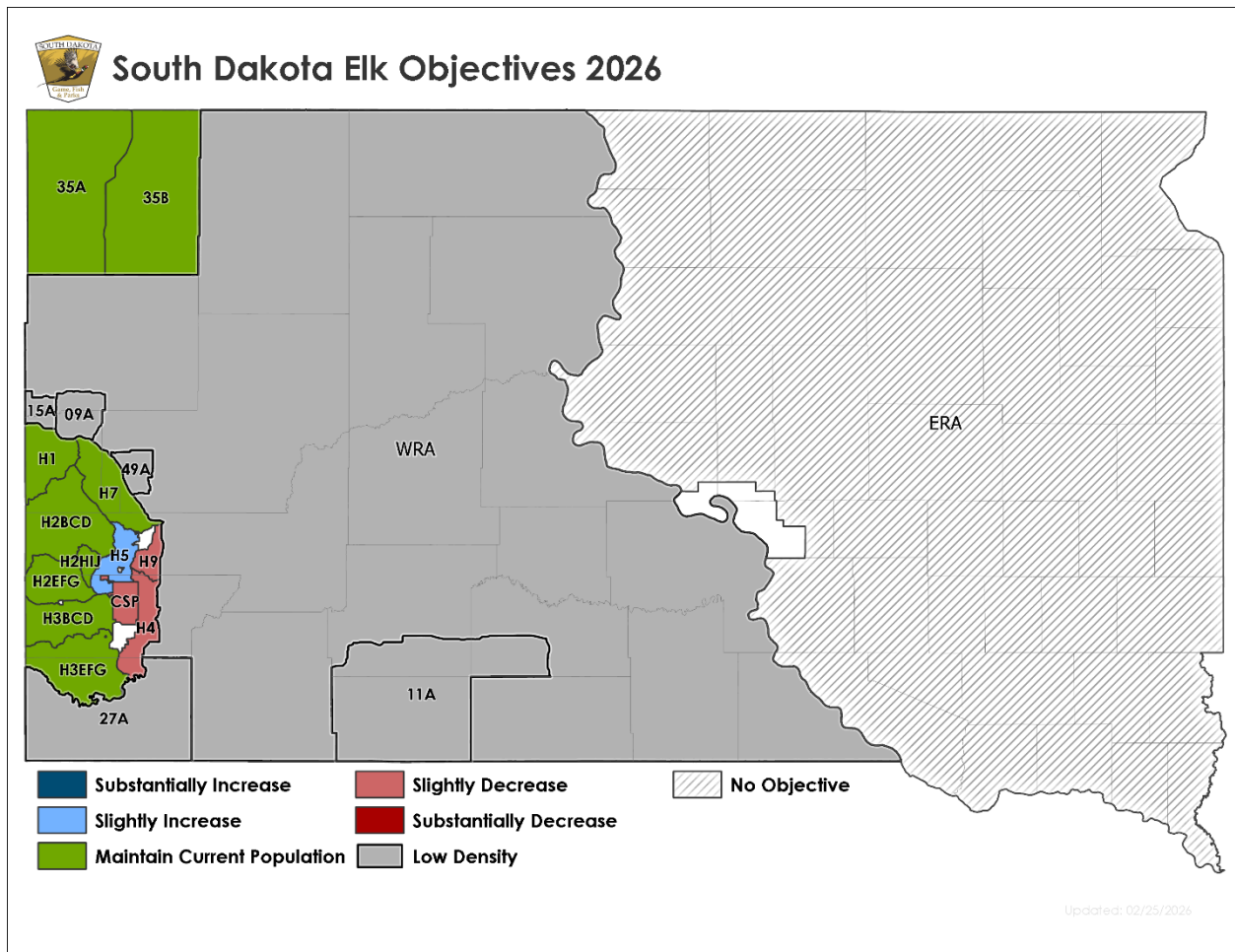


Figure 2. 2025-26 elk management objective directions.

## MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

1. Maintain, manage, and protect existing elk habitat throughout the Black Hills.
  - A. Based on habitat conditions and population densities, in concert with input from the public and BHNF range conservationists, periodically evaluate if adjustments to management unit objective directions are warranted.
  - B. Biannually (when developing season recommendations in winter and again in mid to late summer) evaluate environmental and range conditions for impacts from drought, wildfires, etc. to determine if harvest management strategies are appropriate for range conditions.
  - C. Annually work with public land management agencies, conservation organizations, and private landowners to manage and conserve the most important elk habitat areas in the Black Hills.
  - D. Utilize a pool of “antlerless elk” contingency licenses (ARSD § 41:06:26:06; up to a maximum of 20% of all “antlerless elk” licenses available for all combined Black Hills elk hunting units) that could be issued by GFP Commission resolution in September if summer range conditions dictate an adjustment is needed in the harvest management strategy previously adopted by the GFP Commission. Summer range conditions will be based on forage production estimates produced by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and contingency license allocation based on forage and unit objective directions as outlined in the decision support table below (Table 2).

Table 2. Elk unit contingency license decision support table.

NRCS Forage Production (% of normal/per elk unit)	<u>Contingency Licenses</u> (% of current year unit antlerless allocation)		
	Decrease Obj	Maintain Obj	Increase Obj
90-100%	<i>none</i>	<i>none</i>	<i>none</i>
80-89%	<i>10%</i>	<i>5%</i>	<i>none</i>
70-79%	<i>15%</i>	<i>10%</i>	<i>5%</i>
<70%	<i>20%</i>	<i>15%</i>	<i>10%</i>

2. Manage for biologically and socially acceptable elk populations in each elk management unit within the Black Hills, CSP, and Prairie units of South Dakota.
  - A. Manage for overwinter elk population of 6,000-9,000 elk in the Black Hills and 500-600 in CSP.
  - B. Manage antlerless elk hunting opportunity in Prairie elk hunting season units west of the Missouri River based on landowner demand and to minimize agricultural damage, excluding Harding County.

- C. Manage antlerless elk hunting opportunity in Harding County based on population change objectives considering landowner, hunter, and other stakeholder opinions.
- D. Manage all deeded and public lands located east of the Missouri River to prevent the establishment of any elk populations.
  - Promulgate rules to establish liberal hunting regulations that will prevent the establishment of elk populations in eastern South Dakota.
- E. Monitor distribution and abundance of elk in the Black Hills using various survey methods (e.g., aerial surveys, herd composition).
- F. Use population modeling to estimate elk population trends of Black Hills elk in years with no aerial survey data.
- G. Continue to evaluate the utility of trail camera surveys for estimating Black Hills elk population abundance, population trend, and fall distribution.
- H. Evaluate age at harvest population modeling using age data from hunter harvest elk.
- I. Annually survey hunters to estimate elk harvest and distribution, age of harvested elk, number of hunters, hunter success, and hunter satisfaction.
- J. Biennially assess elk unit management unit objective directions and utilize necessary harvest management tools to ensure objectives are met.
- K. Maintain quality bull elk hunting opportunities:
  - Manage Black Hills elk hunting seasons (firearm and archery combined) and CSP elk hunting seasons (firearm and archery combined) for an average bull harvest age structure of 60% bulls 4+ years of age. If age structure data are unavailable, a secondary objective in the Black Hills and CSP will be to manage for a minimum of 75% hunter success for hunters with “any elk” Black Hills and CSP firearm license types.
  - Manage bull hunting opportunity in Prairie elk hunting season units west of the Missouri River based on socially acceptable levels related to recreational hunting opportunity.
- L. Maintain maximum elk hunting opportunities in the Black Hills by allocating 30% of total “any elk” licenses and 10% of total “antlerless elk” licenses available in the Black Hills as archery licenses, with the remainder (70% any-elk and 90% antlerless elk) issued as firearm licenses.
- M. Maintain maximum elk hunting opportunities in CSP by allocating 30% of “any elk” licenses available in CSP as archery licenses, with the remainder (70%) issued as firearm licenses. Antlerless management will be conducted using firearm hunters.
- N. Monitor and evaluate Chronic Wasting Disease in wild elk herds in South Dakota as determined by the South Dakota Chronic Wasting Disease Action Plan found at <https://gfp.sd.gov/chronic-wasting-disease/> under “Related Documents”.

3. Cooperatively work with private landowners to resolve elk depredation to growing crops, stored-feed supplies, and private property.
  - A. Respond to all elk depredation concerns on private land in a timely manner.
  - B. Continue to utilize elk depredation pool hunts (ARSD § 41:06:46) when warranted, to address elk depredation concerns.
  - C. Expand hunting opportunities and hunter access, when and where possible, to help address elk depredation on private lands.
  - D. Evaluate and implement management methods, including potential hunting opportunities outside existing hunting units, to address elk populations expanding east of the Missouri River.

Please refer to the Management of Elk in South Dakota (<https://gfp.sd.gov/management-plans/>) for additional information related to achieving the management priorities.

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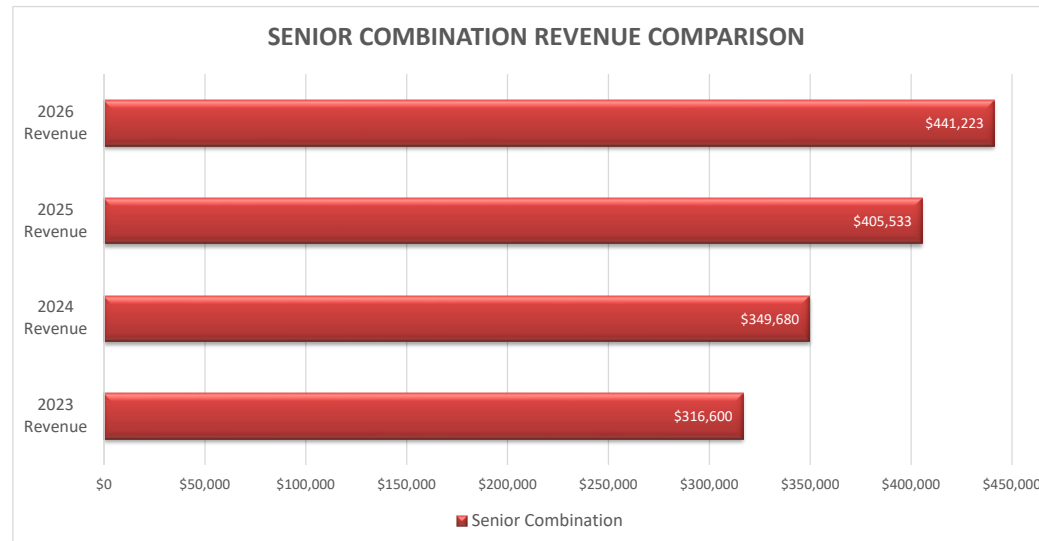
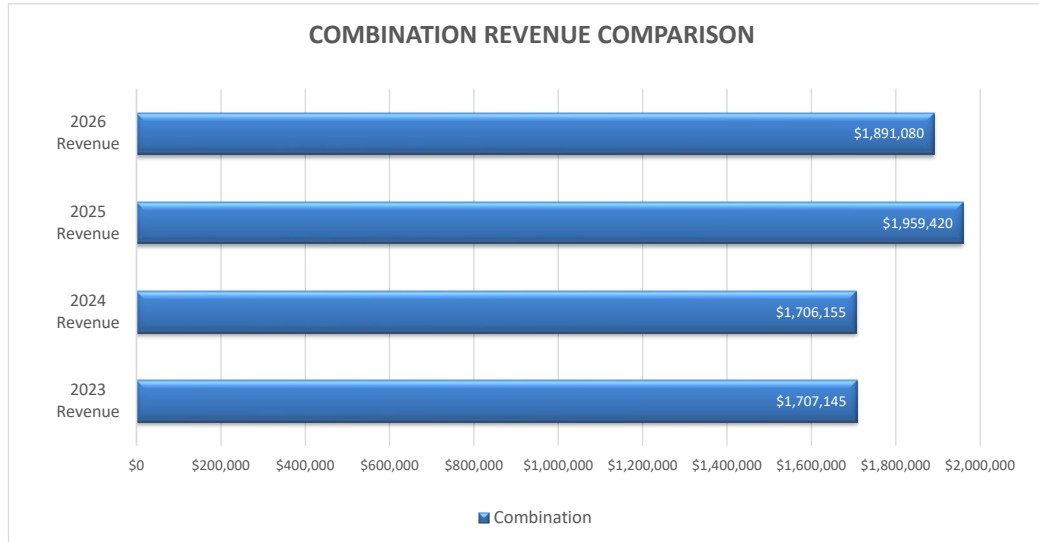




## COMBINATION LICENSES

December 15 - April 30

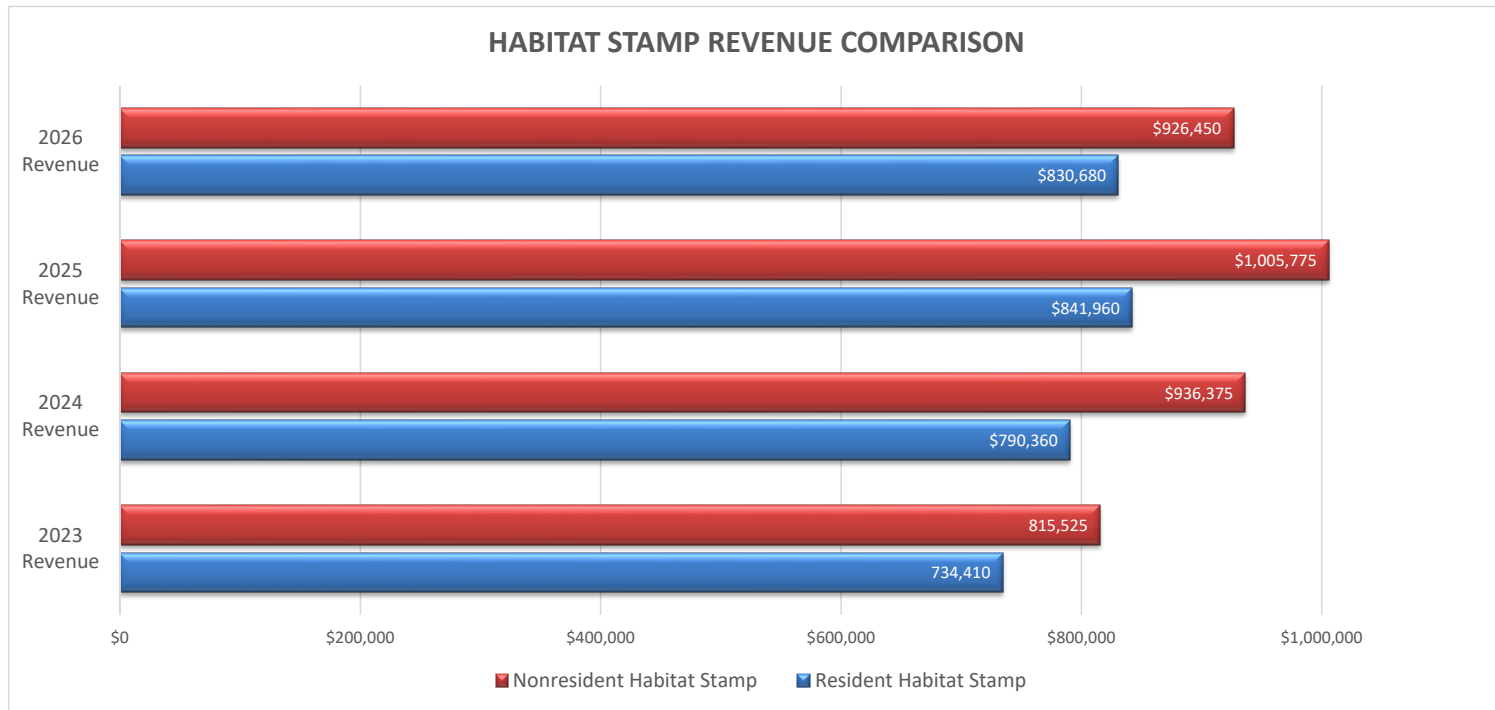
License Type						+/- Licenses		+/- Revenue		% Change from 3 Yr. Avg	
	2023	2024	2025	3-yr Avg	2026	2026 Revenue	2025 vs 2026	3 Yr. Avg vs 2026	2025 vs 2026		3 Yr. Avg vs 2026
Combination	31,039	31,021	32,657	31,572	31,518	\$1,891,080	(1,139)	(54)	(\$68,340)	\$100,173	0%
Senior Combination	7,915	8,742	9,431	8,696	10,261	\$441,223	830	1,565	\$35,690	\$83,952	18%
<b>Combination License Totals</b>	<b>38,954</b>	<b>39,763</b>	<b>42,088</b>	<b>40,268</b>	<b>41,779</b>	<b>\$2,332,303</b>	<b>(309)</b>	<b>1,511</b>	<b>(\$32,650)</b>	<b>\$184,125</b>	<b>18%</b>



## HABITAT STAMP

December 15 - April 30

License Type						+/- Licenses		+/- Revenue		% Change from 3 Yr. Avg	
	2023	2024	2025	3-yr Avg	2026	2026 Revenue	2025 vs 2026	3 Yr. Avg vs 2026	2025 vs 2026		3 Yr. Avg vs 2026
Resident Habitat Stamp	73,441	79,036	84,196	78,891	83,068	\$830,680	(1,128)	4,177	(\$11,280)	\$41,770	5%
Nonresident Habitat Stamp	32,621	37,455	40,231	36,769	37,058	\$926,450	(3,173)	289	(\$79,325)	\$7,225	1%
<b>Habitat Stamp Totals</b>	<b>106,062</b>	<b>116,491</b>	<b>124,427</b>	<b>115,660</b>	<b>120,126</b>	<b>\$1,757,130</b>	<b>(4,301)</b>	<b>4,466</b>	<b>(\$90,605)</b>	<b>\$48,995</b>	<b>4%</b>

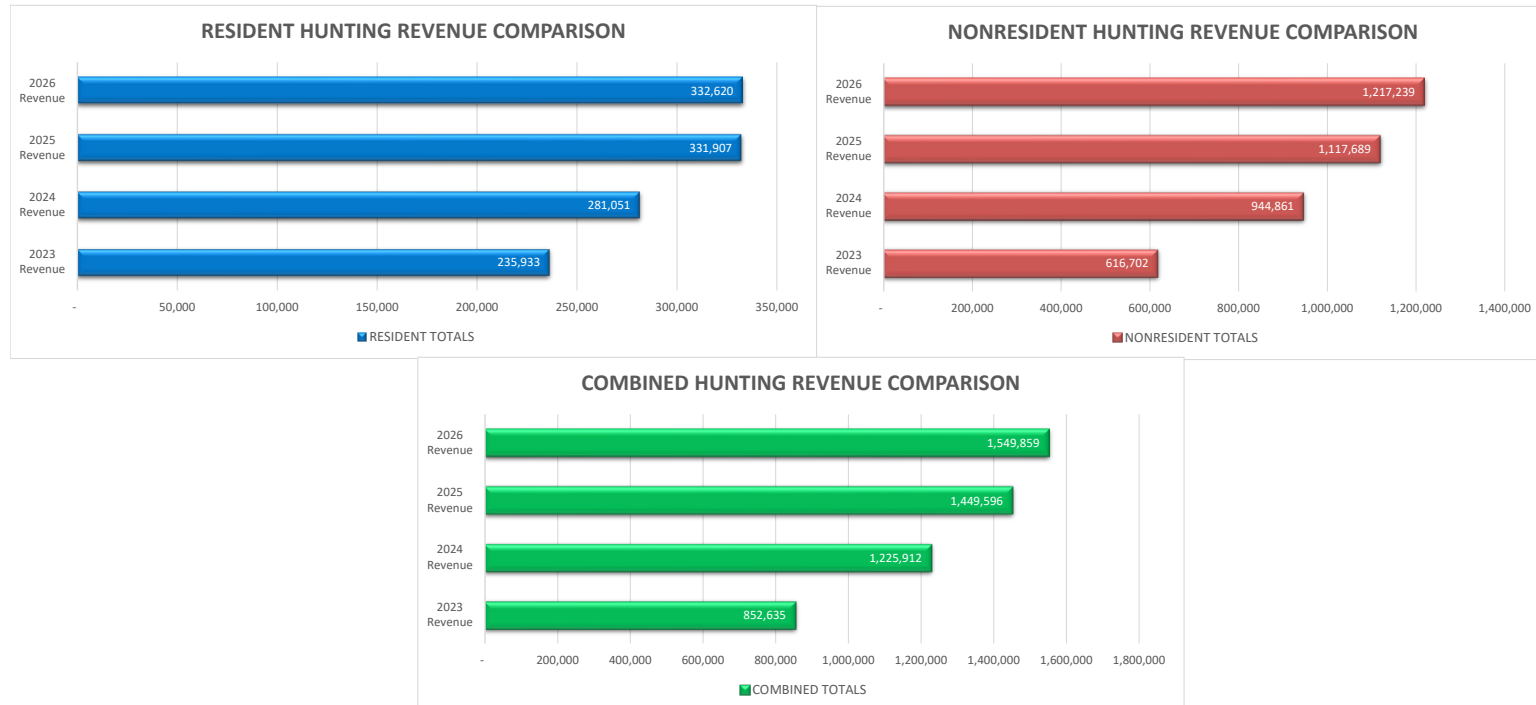


## SMALL GAME LICENSES

December 15 - April 30

License Type						+/- Licenses			+/- Revenue			% Change
	2023	2024	2025	3-yr Avg	2026	2026 Revenue	2025 vs 2026	3 Yr. Avg vs 2026	2025 vs 2026	3 Yr. Avg vs 2026	from 3 Yr. Avg	
Small Game	4,050	5,202	5,978	5,077	5,895	\$212,220	(83)	818	(\$2,988)	\$38,712	16%	
1-Day Small Game	94	195	197	162	233	\$3,495	36	71	\$540	\$1,354	44%	
Youth Small Game	970	1,052	965	996	1,082	\$5,410	117	86	\$585	\$432	9%	
Mentor Small Game	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	190	\$950	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Furbearer	2,637	2,824	3,004	2,822	3,097	\$96,007	93	275	\$2,883	\$10,356	10%	
Predator/Varmint	1,236	1,031	760	1,009	798	\$4,788	38	(211)	\$228	(\$510)	-21%	
Migratory Bird Certificate: 3-Duck	194	154	102	150	88	\$440	(14)	(62)	(\$70)	(\$310)	-41%	
Migratory Bird Certificate: Traditional	2,009	2,228	2,145	2,127	1,862	\$9,310	(283)	(265)	(\$1,415)	(\$1,327)	-12%	
<b>RESIDENT TOTALS</b>	<b>11,190</b>	<b>12,686</b>	<b>13,151</b>	<b>12,342</b>	<b>13,245</b>	<b>\$332,620</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>775</b>	<b>(\$237)</b>	<b>\$48,706</b>	<b>6.28%</b>	
Small Game	2,464	4,756	5,179	4,133	5,444	\$773,048	265	1,311	\$37,630	\$272,955	32%	
Youth Small Game	157	316	329	267	297	\$2,970	(32)	30	(\$320)	\$297	11%	
Mentor Small Game	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	74	\$740	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Shooting Preserve 1-Day Nonresident	102	165	191	153	238	\$11,900	47	85	\$2,350	\$4,877	56%	
Shooting Preserve 5-Day Nonresident	798	987	1,199	995	1,340	\$128,640	141	345	\$13,536	\$53,045	35%	
Shooting Preserve Annual Nonresident	56	59	63	59	85	\$12,410	22	26	(\$3,212)	\$5,231	43%	
Furbearer	0	5	1	2	3	\$975	2	1	\$650	\$425	0%	
Predator/Varmint	960	1,091	1,180	1,077	1,184	\$54,464	4	107	\$184	\$11,384	10%	
Migratory Bird Certificate: 3-Duck	28	28	113	56	103	\$515	(10)	47	(\$50)	\$233	83%	
Migratory Bird Certificate: Traditional	3,358	4,215	3,736	3,770	3,608	\$18,040	(128)	(162)	(\$640)	(\$808)	-4%	
Spring Light Goose	3,626	4,034	3,662	3,774	3,514	\$214,354	(148)	(260)	\$49,564	\$31,757	-7%	
Youth Spring Light Goose	317	329	309	318	267	\$5,607	(42)	(51)	(\$882)	(\$1,078)	-16%	
<b>NONRESIDENT TOTALS</b>	<b>11,866</b>	<b>15,985</b>	<b>15,962</b>	<b>10,512</b>	<b>16,157</b>	<b>\$1,223,663</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>1,479</b>	<b>\$98,810</b>	<b>\$378,318</b>	<b>14.07%</b>	
<b>COMBINED TOTALS</b>	<b>23,056</b>	<b>28,671</b>	<b>29,113</b>	<b>22,854</b>	<b>29,402</b>	<b>\$1,556,283</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>6,548</b>	<b>\$98,573</b>	<b>\$427,025</b>	<b>28.65%</b>	

\*Spring Light Goose decreased by \$5 when the migratory bird certificate was no longer included.

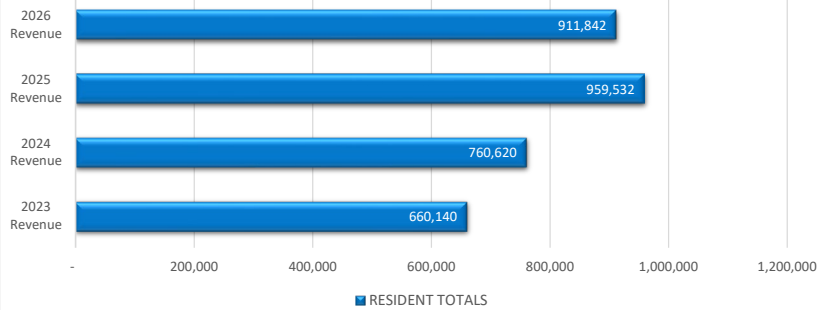


## FISHING LICENSES

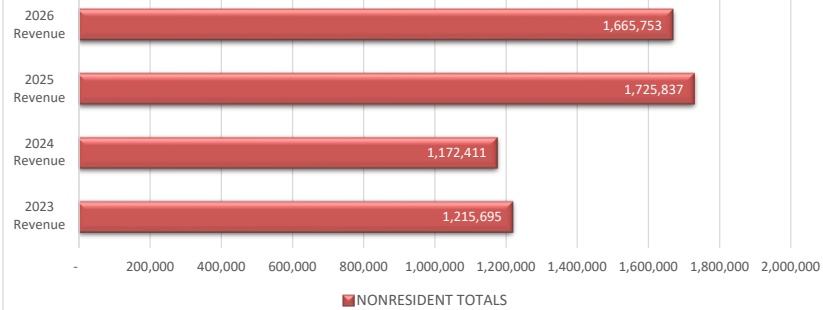
December 15 - April 30

License Type						+/- Licenses		+/- Revenue		% Change	
	2023	2024	2025	3-yr Avg	2026	2026 Revenue	2025 vs 2026	3 Yr. Avg vs 2026	2025 vs 2026	3 Yr. Avg vs 2026	from 3 Yr. Avg
1-Day Fishing	878	941	1,289	1,036	1,129	\$11,290	(160)	93	(\$1,600)	\$2,143	9%
Annual Fishing	20,851	23,834	26,419	23,701	25,196	\$781,076	(1,223)	1,495	(\$37,913)	\$91,020	6%
Senior Fishing	5,774	7,145	7,509	6,809	7,028	\$119,476	(481)	219	(\$8,177)	\$25,249	3%
<b>RESIDENT TOTALS</b>	<b>27,503</b>	<b>31,920</b>	<b>35,217</b>	<b>31,547</b>	<b>33,353</b>	<b>911,842</b>	<b>(1,864)</b>	<b>1,806</b>	<b>(\$47,690)</b>	<b>\$118,411</b>	<b>5.73%</b>
1-Day Fishing	4,765	4,431	4,272	4,489	3,778	\$98,228	(494)	(711)	(\$12,844)	\$12,159	-16%
3-Day Fishing	4,083	2,958	4,769	3,937	4,489	\$202,005	(280)	552	(\$12,600)	\$43,631	14%
Annual Fishing	14,752	14,807	17,502	15,687	17,069	\$1,365,520	(433)	1,382	(\$34,640)	\$238,649	9%
<b>NONRESIDENT TOTALS</b>	<b>23,600</b>	<b>22,196</b>	<b>26,543</b>	<b>24,113</b>	<b>25,336</b>	<b>\$1,665,753</b>	<b>(1,207)</b>	<b>1,223</b>	<b>(\$60,084)</b>	<b>\$294,439</b>	<b>5.07%</b>
<b>COMBINED TOTALS</b>	<b>51,103</b>	<b>54,116</b>	<b>61,760</b>	<b>55,660</b>	<b>58,689</b>	<b>\$2,577,595</b>	<b>(3,071)</b>	<b>3,029</b>	<b>(\$107,774)</b>	<b>\$412,850</b>	<b>5.44%</b>

### RESIDENT FISHING REVENUE COMPARISON



### NONRESIDENT FISHING REVENUE COMPARISON



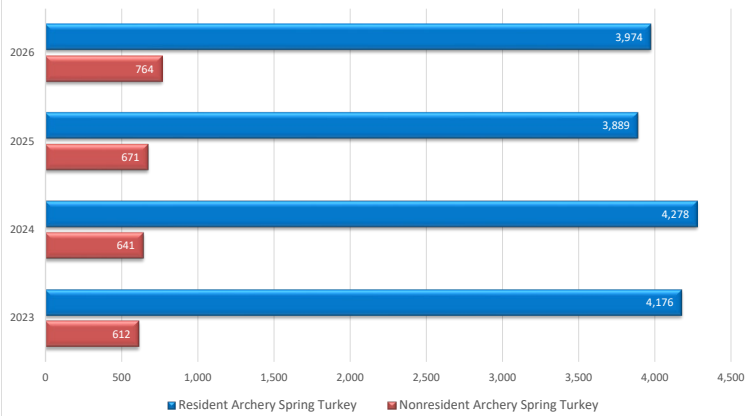
### COMBINED FISHING REVENUE COMPARISON



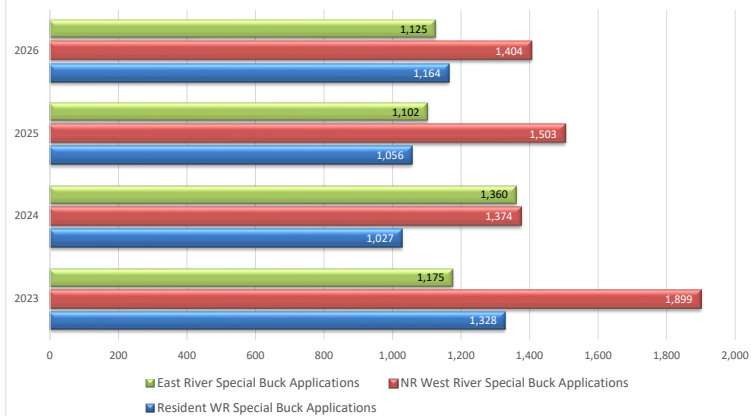
## 2026 BIG GAME LICENSES

License Type	2023	2024	2025	3-yr Avg	2026	2026 Revenue	+/- Licenses		+/- Revenue		% Change from 3 Yr. Avg	
							2025 vs 2026	3 Yr. Avg vs 2026	2025 vs 2026	3 Yr. Avg vs 2026		
Mountain Lion	2,610	2,826	2,826	2,754	2,896	\$86,880	70	142	\$7,752	\$9,768	5%	
Resident Mentored Spring Turkey	1,567	1,659	1,717	1,648	1,404	\$7,020	(313)	(244)	(\$1,565)	(\$1,218)	-15%	
NR Mentored Spring Turkey	60	90	99	83	145	\$1,450	46	62	\$460	\$620	75%	
Resident Archery Spring Turkey	4,176	4,278	3,889	4,114	3,974	\$111,272	85	(140)	\$14,047	\$8,414	-3%	
Nonresident Archery Spring Turkey	612	641	671	641	764	\$92,444	93	123	\$25,344	\$28,311	19%	
Resident Black Hills Spring Turkey	2,555	2,681	2,710	2,649	2,925	\$81,900	215	276	\$14,150	\$15,683	10%	
East River Special Buck	500	500	500	500	500	\$100,000	0	0	\$12,500	\$12,500	0%	
Resident WR Special Buck	701	745	745	730	794	\$158,800	49	64	\$28,425	\$30,992	9%	
NR West River Special Buck	1,000	995	995	997	999	\$649,350	4	2	\$92,150	\$91,217	0%	
Resident Archery Paddlefish	255	255	255	255	255	\$7,650	0	0	\$1,275	\$1,275	0%	
NR Archery Paddlefish	20	20	20	20	20	\$1,000	0	0	\$500	\$500	0%	
<b>Applications Submitted</b>												
East River Special Buck Applications	1,175	1,360	1,102	1,212	1,125	n/a	23	(87)	n/a	n/a	-7%	
Resident WR Special Buck Applications	1,328	1,027	1,056	1,137	1,164	n/a	108	27	n/a	n/a	2%	
NR West River Special Buck Applications	1,899	1,374	1,503	1,592	1,404	n/a	(99)	(188)	n/a	n/a	-12%	
Resident Archery Paddlefish Applications	702	765	604	690	461	n/a	(143)	(229)	n/a	n/a	-33%	
NR Archery Paddlefish Applications	172	209	148	176	97	n/a	(51)	(79)	n/a	n/a	-45%	

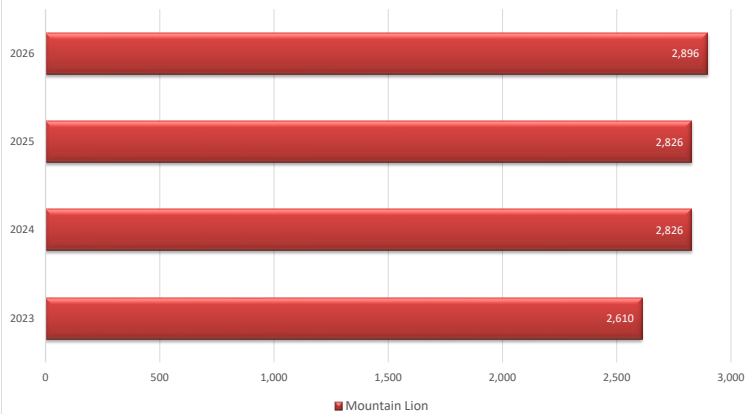
### ARCHERY SPRING TURKEY LICENSES ISSUED



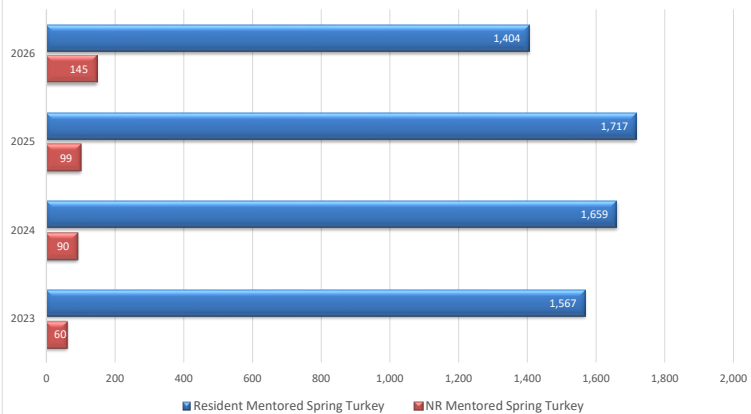
### SPECIAL BUCK APPLICATIONS



### MOUNTAIN LION LICENSES ISSUED



### MENTORED SPRING TURKEY LICENSES ISSUED





# GAME, FISH, AND PARKS COMMISSION ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

## Custer State Park Bison Licenses

Chapter 41:06:42 and 41:06:60

**Commission Meeting Dates:**                      **Finalization May 8, 2026**                      **Custer State Park**

**COMMISSION ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION**

2026 and 2027 CSP Bison Licenses

Season	License Type	Resident 1 <sup>st</sup> draw	2 <sup>nd</sup> draw	Total
Custer State Park Bison	Trophy Bull Bison	7	4	11
	Non-trophy Bull Bison	15	10	25
	Trophy Bull Bison	2 licenses through Hunt-for-Habitat Raffle		2

**SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION**

Table 1. Comparison of bison license availability from 2024 and 2025 hunting seasons to 2026 and 2027 hunting seasons.

Season	License Type	2024 and 2025	2026 and 2027	Change
Custer State Park Bison	Trophy Bull Bison	10	11	+1
	Non-trophy Bull Bison	20	25	+5
	Trophy Bull Bison	2 licenses through Hunt-for-Habitat Raffle		+1

APPROVE \_\_\_\_\_ MODIFY \_\_\_\_\_ REJECT \_\_\_\_\_ NO ACTION \_\_\_\_\_



# OPERATION OUTDOORS



Supporting Veterans  
Through Outdoor Experiences

The open prairie doesn't ask what they've been through.  
The woods don't care about rank.  
The river inspires them to keep moving.

## PATRIOTS IN PARKS

provides veteran organizations opportunities  
to host programming in South Dakota's state parks,  
where nature supports the healing, connection,  
and confidence our veterans deserve.

## PROGRAM EXAMPLES

- » Camping & Nature Outings
- » Outdoor Skills Expeditions
- » Health & Wellness Programs
- » Community-building Experiences
- » Mental Strength & Resilience Retreats
- » State Park Hunting & Fishing Programs

## THE IMPACT OF YOUR GIFT

Your donation encourages organizations to use South Dakota State Parks for their veteran support programs. From assisting with overhead costs to helping solve accessibility challenges, you will be making a positive impact on the lives of our service members.

Your gift builds the fund that makes this possible,  
assisting veteran organizations with resources to serve their  
members outdoors in South Dakota's State Parks.

**THEY SHOWED UP FOR US. NOW WE SHOW UP FOR THEM.**  
SCAN THE CODE TO DONATE TODAY.







# 2026 April Camping

4/1/2025 - 4/30/2025	4/1/2026 - 4/30/2026
<b>Camping Units</b>	<b>Camping Units</b>
<b>6255</b>	<b>5123</b>

District	Facility Name	Camping Units	Camping Units	%	
1	Fort Sisseton State Park	30	7	-77%	
	Pickerel Lake Recreation Area	34	30	-12%	
	Twin Lake Lakeside Use Area	0	0	NA	
	Roy Lake State Park	114	86	-25%	
	Sica Hollow State Park	4	5	25%	
	Amsden Dam Lakeside Use Area	0	3	NA	
	Fisher Grove State Park	17	2	-88%	
	Lake Louise Recreation Area	14	8	-43%	
2	Mina Lake Recreation Area	47	72	53%	
	Richmond Lake Recreation Area	27	33	22%	
	Hartford Beach State Park	110	91	-17%	
3	Lake Cochrane Recreation Area	4	5	25%	
	Pelican Lake Recreation Area	90	48	-47%	
	Sandy Shore Recreation Area	15	15	0%	
4	Lake Poinsett Recreation Area	49	14	-71%	
	Oakwood Lakes State Park	88	44	-50%	
5	Lake Carthage Lakeside Use Area	0	7	NA	
	Lake Herman State Park	112	116	4%	
	Lake Thompson Recreation Area	40	54	35%	
	Walkers Point Recreation Area	18	6	-67%	
	Burke Lake Recreation Area	0	2	NA	
6	Buryanek Recreation Area	64	61	-5%	
	Dude Ranch Lakeside Use Area	0	0	NA	
	Platte Creek Recreation Area	62	18	-71%	
	Snake Creek Recreation Area	136	119	-13%	
	Big Sioux State Recreation Area	442	391	-12%	
7	Lake Vermillion Recreation Area	285	205	-28%	
	Palisades State Park	384	355	-8%	
8	Newton Hills State Park	220	186	-15%	
	Union Grove State Park	38	56	47%	
9	Chief White Crane Recreation Area	239	153	-36%	
	Clay County Park	19	42	121%	
	Lewis and Clark Recreation Area	611	588	-4%	
	Pierson Ranch Recreation Area	94	73	-22%	
	Sand Creek Lakeside Use Area	1	7	600%	
	Springfield Recreation Area	55	12	-78%	
	Tabor Lakeside Use Area	0	5	NA	
	North Point Recreation Area	108	99	-8%	
	South Shore Lakeside Use Area	0	0	NA	
	White Swan Lakeside Use Area	0	0	NA	
10	North Wheeler Recreation Area	0	4	NA	
	Star Valley Lakeside Use Area	0	0	NA	
	Pease Creek Recreation Area	26	25	-4%	
	Randall Creek Recreation Area	50	45	-10%	
	Whetstone Bay Lakeside Use Area	16	18	13%	
	Farm Island Recreation Area	164	110	-33%	
	11	West Bend Recreation Area	123	110	-11%
		Cow Creek Recreation Area	71	51	-28%
	12	Oahe Downstream Recreation Area	229	182	-21%
		Okobojo Point Recreation Area	4	0	-100%
Spring Creek Recreation Area		10	34	240%	
East Whitlock Lakeside Use Area		3	2	-33%	
Little Bend Lakeside Use Area		0	0	NA	
Walth Bay Lakeside Use Area		0	0	NA	
13	Indian Creek Recreation Area	72	17	-76%	
	Lake Hiddenwood Recreation Area	3	2	-33%	
	Little Moreau Recreation Area	0	7	NA	
	Swan Creek Recreation Area	0	3	NA	
	West Pollock Recreation Area	7	1	-86%	
	West Whitlock Recreation Area	18	13	-28%	
	14	Bear Butte State Park	29	8	-72%
Hugh Glass Lakeside Use Area		0	7	NA	
Llewellyn Johns Recreation Area		3	1	-67%	
Rocky Point Recreation Area		167	146	-13%	
15	Shadehill Recreation Area	117	28	-76%	
	16	Custer State Park	1118	869	-22%
Angostura Recreation Area		419	378	-10%	
17	Sheps Canyon Recreation Area	33	44	33%	
<b>Total:</b>		<b>6255</b>	<b>5123</b>	<b>-18%</b>	



# 2026 April YTD Camping

1/1/2025 - 4/30/2025	1/1/2026 - 4/30/2026
<b>Camping Units</b>	<b>Camping Units</b>
<b>7951</b>	<b>7605</b>

District	Facility Name	Camping Units	Camping Units	%	
1	Fort Sisseton State Park	38	14	-63%	
	Pickerel Lake Recreation Area	59	50	-15%	
	Twin Lake Recreation Area	0	0	NA	
	Roy Lake State Park	226	221	-2%	
	Sica Hollow State Park	6	7	17%	
	Amsden Dam Lakeside Use Area	1	4	300%	
	Fisher Grove State Park	17	7	-59%	
	Lake Louise Recreation Area	30	18	-40%	
	Mina Lake Recreation Area	79	118	49%	
	Richmond Lake Recreation Area	36	159	342%	
2	Hartford Beach State Park	129	98	-24%	
	Lake Cochrane Recreation Area	5	7	40%	
	Pelican Lake Recreation Area	107	66	-38%	
	Sandy Shore Recreation Area	20	17	-15%	
3	Lake Poinsett Recreation Area	60	23	-62%	
	Oakwood Lakes State Park	107	74	-31%	
4	Lake Carthage Lakeside Use Area	0	7	NA	
	Lake Herman State Park	140	260	86%	
5	Lake Thompson Recreation Area	102	95	-7%	
	Walkers Point Recreation Area	101	13	-87%	
	Burke Lake Recreation Area	1	3	200%	
	Buryanek Recreation Area	69	85	23%	
6	Dude Ranch Lakeside Use Area	1	5	400%	
	Elm Creek Lakeside Use Area	0	2	NA	
	Platte Creek Recreation Area	62	21	-66%	
	Snake Creek Recreation Area	155	149	-4%	
	Big Sioux State Recreation Area	532	517	-3%	
7	Lake Vermillion Recreation Area	329	271	-18%	
	Palisades State Park	518	558	8%	
	Newton Hills State Park	304	334	10%	
8	Union Grove State Park	56	60	7%	
	Chief White Crane Recreation Area	255	157	-38%	
9	Clay County Park	19	42	121%	
	Lewis and Clark Recreation Area	703	789	12%	
	Pierson Ranch Recreation Area	100	88	-12%	
	Sand Creek Lakeside Use Area	1	7	600%	
	Springfield Recreation Area	56	16	-71%	
	Tabor Lakeside Use Area	0	5	NA	
	North Point Recreation Area	121	110	-9%	
	South Shore Lakeside Use Area	0	0	NA	
	White Swan Lakeside Use Area	0	0	NA	
	North Wheeler Recreation Area	0	4	NA	
10	Pease Creek Recreation Area	27	28	4%	
	Randall Creek Recreation Area	56	52	-7%	
	Star Valley Lakeside Use Area	0	6	NA	
	Whetstone Bay Lakeside Use Area	19	19	0%	
	Farm Island Recreation Area	186	145	-22%	
	West Bend Recreation Area	132	134	2%	
	Cow Creek Recreation Area	76	68	-11%	
11	Oahe Downstream Recreation Area	369	285	-23%	
	Okobojo Point Recreation Area	6	3	-50%	
	Spring Creek Recreation Area	15	169	1027%	
	East Whitlock Lakeside Use Area	3	3	0%	
12	Little Bend Lakeside Use Area	0	0	NA	
	Walth Bay Lakeside Use Area	0	0	NA	
	Indian Creek Recreation Area	102	43	-58%	
	Lake Hiddenwood Recreation Area	7	2	-71%	
	Little Moreau Recreation Area	0	7	NA	
	Swan Creek Recreation Area	2	7	250%	
	West Pollock Recreation Area	10	16	60%	
	West Whitlock Recreation Area	29	24	-17%	
	13	Bear Butte State Park	59	24	-59%
		Hugh Glass Lakeside Use Area	0	18	NA
Llewellyn Johns Recreation Area		5	1	-80%	
14	Rocky Point Recreation Area	196	178	-9%	
	Shadehill Recreation Area	134	60	-55%	
	15	Custer State Park	1464	1271	-13%
Angostura Recreation Area		466	502	8%	
16	Sheps Canyon Recreation Area	43	59	37%	
17					
<b>Total:</b>		<b>7951</b>	<b>7605</b>	<b>-4%</b>	

**Division of Parks and Recreation  
April 2026 Revenue by Item**

	2025		2026		%
	Number	Dollar	Number	Dollar	
Resident Annual	2,661	\$ 103,810	2,053	\$ 76,995	
Non-Resident Annual	827	\$ 48,900	676	\$ 39,430	
Resident Double	3,065	\$ 182,974	3,100	\$ 179,940	
Non-Resident Double	436	\$ 39,060	477	\$ 41,220	
Transferable	276	\$ 24,800	306	\$ 25,720	
GSM Annual Trail Pass	493	\$ 9,860	550	\$ 10,640	
<b>Annual Licenses</b>	<b>7,758</b>	<b>\$ 409,404</b>	<b>7,162</b>	<b>\$ 373,945</b>	<b>-9%</b>
Resident Daily License	1,594	\$ 15,900	1,047	\$ 10,320	
Non-Resident Daily License	1,049	\$ 15,735	839	\$ 12,323	
Unattended Vehicle Daily	30	\$ 580	19	\$ 380	
GSM Daily Trail Pass	232	\$ 1,155	530	\$ 2,650	
Motorcoach Permit	8	\$ 32	39	\$ 156	
CSP 7 Day Pass	4,576	\$ 114,335	5,093	\$ 122,825	
CSP 7 Day Bike Band	54	\$ 1,080	56	\$ 1,100	
Rally Bike Band	-	\$ -	-	\$ -	
One-Day Special Event	11	\$ 1,100	2	\$ 200	
Festival Daily	-	\$ -	-	\$ -	
<b>Daily Licenses</b>	<b>7,554</b>	<b>\$ 149,917</b>	<b>7,625</b>	<b>\$ 149,954</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Licenses</b>	<b>15,312</b>	<b>\$ 559,321</b>	<b>14,787</b>	<b>\$ 523,899</b>	<b>-6%</b>
Camping Services		\$ 1,594,926		\$ 1,479,614	-7%
Pet Fees	99	\$ 987	294	\$ 2,889	193%
<b>LODGING</b>		<b>\$ 1,595,913</b>		<b>\$ 1,482,503</b>	<b>-7%</b>
Picnic Shelters		\$ 1,440		\$ 3,789	163%
Boat Rentals		\$ 384		\$ -	-100%
Firewood	424	\$ 2,822	208	\$ 1,351	-52%
Gift Card	12	\$ 941	13	\$ 871	-7%
Spring Creek Boat Slips		\$ 80,206		\$ 14,008	-83%
Recreational Equipment Rentals		\$ 67		\$ 29	-57%
Retail		\$ 2,040		\$ 6,675	227%
Call Center Fee	1,397	\$ 8,306	1,229	\$ 6,966	-16%
Cabin/Trailer Lease Permits		\$ -		\$ 3,130	NA
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>		<b>\$ 96,206</b>		<b>\$ 36,819</b>	<b>-62%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$ 2,251,441</b>		<b>\$ 2,043,220</b>	<b>-9%</b>

**Division of Parks and Recreation**  
**April YTD 2026 Revenue by Item**

	2025		2026		%
	Number	Dollar	Number	Dollar	
Resident Annual	6,122	\$ 238,621	5,497	\$ 208,775	
Non-Resident Annual	1,915	\$ 112,355	1,960	\$ 113,540	
Resident Double	8,333	\$ 496,944	9,771	\$ 565,990	
Non-Resident Double	1,098	\$ 98,100	1,404	\$ 122,128	
Transferable	729	\$ 65,210	792	\$ 68,340	
GSM Annual Trail Pass	1,008	\$ 19,965	1,242	\$ 23,760	
<b>Annual Licenses</b>	<b>19,205</b>	<b>\$ 1,031,195</b>	<b>20,666</b>	<b>\$ 1,102,533</b>	<b>7%</b>
Resident Daily License	3,194	\$ 31,842	3,102	\$ 30,660	
Non-Resident Daily License	2,149	\$ 32,205	2,088	\$ 30,413	
Unattended Vehicle Daily	89	\$ 1,725	40	\$ 800	
GSM Daily Trail Pass	561	\$ 2,663	755	\$ 3,775	
Motorcoach Permit	104	\$ 325	42	\$ 168	
CSP 7 Day Pass	8,334	\$ 207,695	8,183	\$ 199,075	
CSP 7 Day Bike Band	-	\$ -	89	\$ 1,760	
Rally Bike Band	-	\$ -	-	\$ -	
One-Day Special Event	4	\$ 1,800	6	\$ 575	
Festival Daily	-	\$ -	-	\$ -	
<b>Daily Licenses</b>	<b>14,435</b>	<b>\$ 278,255</b>	<b>14,305</b>	<b>\$ 267,226</b>	<b>-4%</b>
<b>Licenses</b>	<b>33,640</b>	<b>\$ 1,309,450</b>	<b>34,971</b>	<b>\$ 1,369,759</b>	<b>5%</b>
Camping Services		\$ 4,652,890		\$ 4,386,446	-6%
Pet Fees		\$ 3,426	798	\$ 7,687	124%
<b>LODGING</b>		<b>\$ 4,656,315</b>		<b>\$ 4,394,132</b>	<b>-6%</b>
Picnic Shelter		\$ 4,150		\$ 6,514	57%
Boat Rentals		\$ 744		\$ -	-100%
Firewood	560	\$ 3,730	372	\$ 2,419	-35%
Gift Card	64	\$ 5,950	47	\$ 3,866	-35%
Spring Creek Boat Slips		\$ 123,806		\$ 162,353	31%
Recreational Equipment Rentals		\$ 242		\$ 29	-88%
Retail		\$ 5,396		\$ 9,159	70%
Call Center Fee	3,456	\$ 20,598	2,995	\$ 17,148	-17%
Cabin/Trailer Lease Permits		\$ 213,899		\$ 225,671	6%
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>		<b>\$ 378,514</b>		<b>\$ 427,159</b>	<b>13%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$ 6,344,279</b>		<b>\$ 6,191,051</b>	<b>-2%</b>

### April 2026 YTD Revenue, Camping and Modern Lodging 3-year Summary

	2023		2024		2025*		3-Yr Avg		2026		% Change (3-Yr Avg)	
	\$	#	\$	#	\$	#	\$	#	\$	#	\$	#
Annual Licenses	\$ 734,955	16402	\$ 904,293	20348	\$ 1,031,195	19205	\$ 890,148	18652	\$ 1,102,533	20666	23.9%	10.8%
Daily Licenses	\$ 146,368	9819	\$ 195,832	12963	\$ 278,255	14435	\$ 206,818	12406	\$ 267,226	14305	29.2%	15.3%
Camping/Lodging	\$ 4,167,648		\$ 4,295,532		\$ 4,656,315		\$ 4,373,165		\$ 4,394,132		0.5%	
Miscellaneous	\$ 226,581		\$ 325,789		\$ 378,514		\$ 310,295		\$ 427,159		37.7%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 5,275,552</b>	<b>26221</b>	<b>\$ 5,721,446</b>	<b>33311</b>	<b>\$ 6,344,279</b>	<b>33640</b>	<b>\$ 5,780,426</b>	<b>31057</b>	<b>\$ 6,191,050</b>	<b>34971</b>	<b>7.1%</b>	<b>12.6%</b>

\* Fee increase in 2025

	2023*	2024	2025	3-Yr Avg	2026	% (3-yr Avg)
<b>Camping Units</b>	5732	7809	7951	7164	7605	6.2%
<b>Modern Lodging Nights Booked January 1 through December 31</b>						
Lake Thompson		104	100	102	96	-5.9%
Mina Lake		86	118	102	111	8.8%
Newton Hills (3 units)		212	244	228	190	-16.7%
Oahe Downstream (5 units)		572	605	589	514	-12.7%
Palisades		116	107	112	91	-18.4%
Pickrel Lake		58	128	93	135	45.2%
Roy Lake (12 units)		1027	1134	1081	1176	8.8%
Shadehill		124	160	142	148	4.2%
Sheps Canyon		87	73	80	65	-18.8%
Spring Creek (16 units)		575	671	623	994	59.6%
<b>All Parks Total</b>		<b>2961</b>	<b>3340</b>	<b>3151</b>	<b>3520</b>	<b>11.7%</b>

\* Modern Lodging numbers for 2023 not available



# Public Comments

## Elk Management Action Plan

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**Bruce Murdock**

**Hot Springs SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I would like to comment on the draft Elk Action Plan and the objective to shift the upper end of the population range to 9,000, an increase of 1,000 head. I have a ranch in the southern Black Hills of South Dakota. I see elk regularly on my USFS grazing allotments, as well as on my private hay ground and range and at my water sources. We are in severe drought, reducing the forage quality and quantity. While I enjoy seeing the elk, in our current drought climate, I am strongly against increasing the population size. An increase will put even more pressure on my property and my grazing allotment from the elk, leaving less forage for my livestock and therefore increasing my operating expenses because of more need for supplemental feed for livestock. My private ground and grazing allotment are also being frequented by illegal and uncontrolled trespassing horses from the wild horse sanctuary nearby. The horses are putting heavy pressure on the forage, resulting in the elk being pushed to my ground and my neighbors. We definitely don't need more elk at this time. The land just can't handle it.

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**Jayden Halsey**

**Aberdeen SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

It would be so wonderful to see the increase of the objective to reach 9,000 in my lifetime! Let's take a step in the right direction and get this going!

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**George Vandell**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

I support the plan's increase in elk populations. The Hills can easily handle the mild increase. Thank you.

## Other

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**Gary Fawbush**

**Madison SD**

**Position:** other

**Comment:**

I am disappointed that senior citizens were eliminated from the nest predator program. I would like for you to consider extending the bounty on coyotes through the end of the year. Coyote prices are so low it is not feasible to trap them at this time. Thank you.

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**Mike Kintigh**

**Hermosa SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

My comment is in reference to the petition submitted by Klinton Rittberger to allow rifle cow elk hunters to start hunting October 1st in elk unit 4. I strongly support this petition. My family owns just under 3,000 acres in unit 4. We have participated in the elk access program for several years and hosted many elk hunters (Commissioner Cull archery hunted on us) over those years. We need to harvest more cows to manage the herd! On our ranch, we have elk early in the season, but typically by Oct 15th - hunting pressure bunches the elk and pushes them off us. They go where there is less pressure. We allow free access and believe we could harvest more cow elk if that season started earlier. Please support the petition!

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**Jon Sorensen**

**Sioux Falls SD**

**Position:** other

**Comment:**

Im am very disapointed in the way the You trapping program was handle this season. There is countless youth out there that got a late start and now sit on tails they can no longer turn in. Whn dates are set then the quoata better either match it or season be shortened. And second you know as well as anybody else there was more adult catching them than there was youths doing it. I know of three people my self who caught all winter just to get there kids 59 tails. I was 100% for all of this but now when it comes up at the next meeting i will be voicing my thoughts on this program. 20,000 tails in just 6 weeks dosnt add up for the hit these animals have taken over the past 5 years from trapping and the program.

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**Dan Loveland**

**Sioux Falls SD**

**Position:** other

**Comment:**

AIS Operating Plan Comments

Submitting the attached SD Lakes & Streams Assn list of 38 recommendations for improving the effectiveness of AIS prevention. They incorporate best practices being deployed by our neighboring states. Most require little or no additional expenditures. Funding mechanism recommendations for the remaining items reflects what our neighbors already have in place. We can do better for South Dakota than more of the same!

## **Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS)**

### **Recommendations for Improving Prevention Effectiveness in SD**

#### **OBJECTIVES**

1. Deploy a clear, coordinated statewide effort to prevent the spread of AIS
2. Protect our borders from unwanted invaders being transported into SD
3. Educate the public about the economic harm caused by AIS
4. Identify dedicated funding mechanisms to facilitate expansion of AIS prevention efforts

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS - By Category**

##### *LEADERSHIP & ACCOUNTABILITY*

1. Change the tone at the top from “slow the spread” to “prevent the spread”
2. Evaluate qualifications, empowerment and effectiveness of current AIS leadership
3. Discontinue practice of burying announcements of new AIS infestations so that public is made aware of the rate and extent of AIS spread
4. Engage with AIS professionals in neighboring states (Montana recognized as “Best of the West”) and other organizations to learn and implement best practices for AIS prevention, early detection, containment and enforcement
5. Develop clear and coherent regional watercraft inspection strategies that take into consideration number of water bodies, surface water priority locations and watercraft transportation corridors
6. Improve reporting of Clean Drain Dry compliance to incorporate all noncompliance matters initially detected at inspection stations. Assist boaters in correcting violations, but record as violations for more accurate compliance tracking
7. Develop and publish a more detailed breakdown on AIS noncompliance statistics for better accountability and as a resource for prioritizing educational efforts
8. Remove SDFGP organizational barriers that inhibit the ability to utilize state parks and recreation areas as a key opportunity for AIS education

##### *MESSAGING & EDUCATION*

1. Place greater emphasis on educating the public about the economic harm that AIS does to our state
2. Place greater emphasis on creating awareness of emerging AIS threats near SD borders. AIS prevention is not just about zebra mussels
3. Utilize social media to demonstrate that AIS inspection violators are getting citations. Use an approach similar to what SD Highway Patrol uses to illustrate violations without identifying offenders
4. Include AIS regulation and educational material with all boat license mailings

## *COORDINATION*

1. Make AIS prevention a coordinated multi-agency priority in state government, with DANR becoming involved in surface water protection efforts
2. Seek stakeholder input on proposed AIS management strategies prior to submitting to GFP Commission for approval

## *WATERCRAFT INSPECTIONS*

1. Expand watercraft inspection workforce
2. Develop strategy to recruit retired seniors to provide coverage after seasonal workers return to school.
3. Revise noncompliance recording protocol so that all detected noncompliance instances are recorded as such on the inspection tablets, even if the noncompliance issue is subsequently corrected. This will provide more accurate compliance statistics
4. Develop better guidelines for determining whether watercraft inspectors should focus on incoming or exiting boats, or both

## *PREVENTION – Other Recommendations*

1. Develop better solutions for wake surfing boaters to effectively decontaminate ballast tanks. Work with marine dealers to provide education
2. Invest in AIS prevention equipment resources that allow boaters to effectively clean and (when necessary) decontaminate their boats
3. Change posture on willingness to reduce number of state-maintained boat launches on water bodies with multiple boat access points
4. Provide easily accessible information about locations and availability of watercraft decontamination equipment
5. Work to expand public and commercial watercraft decontamination opportunities, such as car washes stations and fish cleaning
6. Explore the feasibility of utilizing one or more zebra mussel detecting canine units for more targeted zebra mussel detection as well as an opportunity for education

## *ENFORCEMENT*

1. Develop better mechanisms for routinely transferring AIS violation information to enforcement officers for followup
2. Evaluate legality and protocol for issuing inspection violation warnings by mail

## *EARLY DETECTION & CONTAINMENT*

1. Begin using zebra mussel veligers tow sampling equipment as a regular SDGFP early detection tool
2. Develop a list of high risk, high impact water bodies and schedule regular shoreline searches for invasive species
3. Engage lake associations and sporting groups by communicating specific volunteer opportunities for prevention and early detection participation. Followup with resource and best practices information, as well as training where appropriate

### *MITIGATION ASSISTANCE*

1. Clarify and streamline permitting requirements for mitigating nuisance vegetation caused by AIS
2. Develop best practices information for surface water users on mitigating nuisance vegetation

### *FUNDING*

1. Increase annual resident boat license fees by a specified amount dedicated to AIS prevention
2. Require nonresidents to purchase and display an annual AIS sticker before any boat can be launched in South Dakota waters
3. Add an AIS prevention fee to both resident and nonresident fishing licenses
4. Place AIS specific fees into a dedicated fund that can only be used for AIS prevention, with unused funds allowed to carry over to the next year
5. Retain current annual grant funding for AIS management strategies (such as USFWS) so that new revenue sources are not replacing other available funding sources
6. Research and take advantage of grant funding opportunities that arise
7. Explore opportunities for shared funding of targeted AIS initiatives in partnership with other public, private, tribal and NGO organizations

### **South Dakota Lakes & Streams Assn**

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