



Commission Meeting Minutes

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks

523 E Capitol Avenue | Pierre, South Dakota 57501

November 7, 2024 | SD State Capitol Building | Pierre, SD

REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING

Call Meeting to Order

Chair Rissler called the meeting to order at 1 pm CST at the SD State Capitol Building in Pierre, SD on November 7, 2024. On November 7, 2024, Commissioners Stephanie Rissler, Jim White, Robert Whitmyre, Jon Locken, Travis Bies, Bruce Cull, Travis Theel, and Julie Bartling were present. With eight commission members present, a quorum was established. The public and staff could listen via SDPB Livestream and participate via conference or in person, with approximately 46 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 October 2024 meeting. Minutes are available at <https://gfp.sd.gov/commission/archives/>.

MOTIONED BY LOCKEN, SECONDED BY WHITE TO APPROVE THE OCTOBER 2024 REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES. The motion carried unanimously.

3. Additional Salary Days [Action Item]

Chair Rissler called for additional salary days from the Commissioners. One additional salary day were submitted for approval for Bartling and Rissler. Two additional salary days were submitted for approval for White.

MOTIONED BY WHITMYRE, SECONDED BY THEEL TO APPROVED THE ADDITIONAL SALARY DAYS. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Staff Introductions [Info Item]

Tom Kirschenmann, Wildlife Director, Jeff VanMeeteren, Parks & Recreation Director, and Scott Simpson, Deputy Secretary, introduced staff to the commission.

5. 2025 Commission Schedule Review [Info Item]

Chair Rissler presented the commission with a proposed 2025 schedule for commission meetings.

6. South Dakota Parks & Wildlife Foundation [Info Item]

Pat Wyss, President, and Kristina Koby, Executive Director of the South Dakota Parks & Wildlife Foundation gave a brief presentation on what the SDPWF has been focusing on in the previous year and their future projects.

Open Forum

Senior Staff Attorney Nick Michels opened the floor at 2:03 pm CST for discussion from those in attendance in matters of importance to them that are listed on the agenda not as a finalization or may not be on the agenda. No comments were provided. The open forum closed at 2:05 pm CST.

7. Petition #225: Removal of Nonresident Restrictions for Furbearer Participation

[Action Item: Petition]

Steve Cherkas of Edgemont, SD submitted petition #225 in which requested the Commission remove trapping restrictions to increase nonresident furbearer participation.



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Director Kirschenmann introduced the first petition requested by Mr. Steve Cherkas asking the Commission to align nonresident trapping privileges with residents. This would include removing restrictive season dates for nonresidents. One of the primary reasons for the request was to provide better opportunities to trap in other states by the petitioner as reciprocity is followed by many states. The commission determined to deny per the recommendation of the department. Primary reasons included the current structure appears to be working well, resident trappers have expressed concerns in the past over the influx of nonresident trappers when fur markets escalate, and a trapping organization from the state expressed opposition to this request.

MOTIONED BY WHITMYRE, SECONDED BY BIES TO DENY PETITION #225. The motion carried unanimously.

RESOLUTION 24-17

WHEREAS, Steve Cherkas of Edgemont, South Dakota, submitted a Petition to the Game, Fish and Parks Commission (Commission) dated October 11, 2024, requesting that the Game, Fish and Parks Commission repeal ARSD § 41:08:01:12 (Nonresident Restrictions) – in order to allow nonresidents the same privileges with respect to trapping as residents; 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

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 allow nonresidents the same privileges with respect to trapping as residents; and

WHEREAS, current regulations provide residents more opportunity than nonresidents based on resident-only seasons (e.g., river otter), reduced fee licenses, and more available licenses, in addition to longer season length; and

WHEREAS, resident trappers have expressed concern over the influx of nonresident trappers when fur markets escalate and create high levels of competition for South Dakota fur resources; and

WHEREAS, it is believed by the majority of resident trappers that the current season structures for residents and nonresidents is fair and functioning very well.

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 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



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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, Steve Cherkas of Edgemont, South Dakota.

MOTIONED BY WHITE, SECONDED BY BIES TO ADOPT RESOLUTION 24-17. The motion carried unanimously.

8. Petition #226: Coyote Bounty Program in Black Hills

[Action Item: Petition]

Director Kirschenmann introduced the first petition requested by Mr. Steve Cherkas requesting to establish a coyote bounty program within the Black Hills to help bolster other wildlife populations. The department recommended to deny the petition for several reasons, primarily because of the challenges associated with assuring they were harvested in the Black Hills and that the department does not have funds set aside for this effort.

MOTIONED BY BARTLING, SECONDED BY WHITE TO DENY PETITION #226. The motion carried unanimously.

RESOLUTION 24-18

WHEREAS, Steve Cherkas of Edgemont, South Dakota, submitted a Petition to the Game, Fish and Parks Commission (Commission) dated October 11, 2024, requesting that the Game, Fish and Parks Commission establish a rule implementing a \$100 bounty on coyotes; 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

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 implement a \$100 bounty on coyotes; and

WHEREAS, current regulations provide year-round, 24-hours per day hunting opportunity for coyotes in most of South Dakota, and the Commission recently extended the coyote season in Custer State Park to start on November 1 to include the deer hunting season and increase harvest; and

WHEREAS, there is no limit to the number of coyotes that can be harvested or the number of resident and nonresident coyote hunters.; and

WHEREAS, confirming that coyotes were harvested within the Black Hills will be an enforcement challenge; and

WHEREAS, the department does not have the financial resources set aside or available for a coyote bounty program for the Black Hills.



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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 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, Steve Cherkas of Edgemont, South Dakota.

MOTIONED BY BIES, SECONDED BY BARLTING TO ADOPT RESOLUTION 24-18. The motion carried unanimously.

9. Two Property Acquisitions for Mickelson Trail [Parks & Recreation: Action Item]

Jeff VanMeeteren, Director of Parks & Recreation asked the Commission to approve and authorize the Dept. of GFP to purchase two separate properties that are adjoined to serve as a new trailhead for the Mickelson Trail in the community of Pringle. Property 1 is owned by Ronald Eastep and is 0.052 acres and was appraised at \$4,500 and Property 2 is owned by Beverly and Robert Morgan and is 0.43 acres and was appraised at \$37,500. Both parties were willing sellers, and the department met the requirements for public notice with no public comments received. Donation funds earmarked for the Mickelson Trail will be used to purchase these properties through the SD Parks & Wildlife Foundation.

RESOLUTION 24-19

WHEREAS, Ronald Eastep ("Eastep") is the owner of certain real property in Custer County consisting of .052 acres, more or less, and described as the Station Subd a portion of TR 1 in SE4SW4 Sec 13 T5S R4E, Custer County, South Dakota ("Property 1"); and

WHEREAS, Eastep desires to sell, and the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department ("Department") desires to purchase Property 1; and

WHEREAS, Eastep and the Department have agreed to a purchase price of four thousand, five hundred dollars (\$4,500) for Property 1, and have drafted an Agreement to that effect; and

WHEREAS, Beverly and Robert Morgan ("Morgans") are the owner of certain real property in Custer County consisting of .43 acres, more or less, and described as the Lots A, B, C, D, E, F of the Sunny Slope Addition to the Town of Pringle, all in the Black Hills Meridian, Custer County, South Dakota ("Property 2"); and

WHEREAS, the Morgans desire to sell, and the Department desires to purchase Property 2; and

WHEREAS, the Morgans and the Department have agreed to a purchase price of thirty-seven thousand, five hundred dollars (\$37,500) for Property 2, and have executed an Agreement to that effect; and

WHEREAS, the Commission has been advised that, pursuant to SDCL § 41-4-1.1, the Department is required to notify the owners of any land, which is located adjacent to the land sought to be purchased by the Department, that the Department is seeking to purchase such land, that such notice must be by publishing notice of the same once in each legal newspaper of the county in which the property to be purchased is located, and that the notification must be made at least thirty days prior to the date of action by the Commission authorizing the intended purchase; and



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WHEREAS the Commission has been advised that the Department notified the owners of land adjacent to Property 1 and Property 2 that the Department is seeking to purchase Property 1 and Property 2, and that such notification was made on October 2, 2024, in the Custer Chronicle Public Notice;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Commission does hereby recognize, approve, and authorize the Department's purchase of Property 1 and Property 2, and that such authorization permits the Department to execute the Agreements drafted with both Eastep and the Morgans, respectively.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Resolution be made a part of the Minutes of the Commission meeting at which this Resolution is adopted.

MOTIONED BY BIES, SECONDED BY CULL TO ADOPT RESOLUTION 24-19. The motion carried unanimously.

10. Wounded Warrior Project at Rocky Point [Parks & Recreation: Info Item]

Brad Nelson the Park Manager at Rocky Point Recreation Area informed the commission about the 2nd Annual Wounded Warrior in Action Archery Antelope Hunt that took place 9-18-24 to 9-23-24 at Rocky Point. Four Purple Heart recipients spent five nights at the Rocky Point cabins while archery hunting antelope on neighboring private lands. Numerous local outdoor clubs, volunteers, and donations made this event possible at no cost to the veterans.

11. Hunting Opportunities on State Park Lands [Parks & Recreation: Info Item]

Heather Berg, Parks Division GIS Program Specialist, highlighted state park hunting opportunities within the interactive Public Hunt Atlas. As visitors zoom in on parks, colored areas appear indicating which areas are closed to hunting and which areas have season or equipment restrictions. Clicking on areas within the park will generate a pop-up window that includes additional information on hunting restrictions.

12. Division Award Recipients [Parks & Recreation: Info Item]

Jeff VanMeeteren, Director of Parks & Recreation informed the Commission of the 2024 Parks Division Award recipients that were honored at the Oct. 8th Annual Division meeting held in Chamberlain, SD.

13. October Camping Unit and Revenue Reports [Parks & Recreation: Info Item]

Jeff VanMeeteren, Director of Parks & Recreation provided the Commission with an overview of camping units for October and YTD. Camping was up 24% in the month of October and was the second highest amount on record with YTD camping up 1% overall or 2,226 units over last years numbers. Weather and cross-marketing of camping with hunting and fishing were credited for these increases. Revenue was also great in the month of October and was up 39%. YTD Revenue is 5% above last year with much of this increase due to expanded entrance license sales of 5-7%.

14. State Threatened and Endangered Species [Wildlife: Action Item]

Andrew Norton, Program Manager, presented a summary of the State Threatened and Endangered Species List review process and comments received regarding the process. The Department's recommendation of no change to the list was supported by the GFP Commission and no changes were considered. The list will be reviewed again in two years.

MOTIONED BY CULL, SECONDED BY THEEL TO APPROVE THE STATE THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES LIST. The motion carried unanimously.

15. Reports from the Field [Wildlife: Info Item]

Tom Kirschenmann, Director of Wildlife Division, provided a short presentation on how the pheasant season is progressing. Kirschenmann discussed hunter's success on opening weekend, crop harvest across the



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state, and observations made by landowners from across the state. In all, the pheasant season was described as going very well with high pheasant numbers. Access was also discussed and shared with the commission that the department has exceeded 1.6M acres of private land enrolled into public access.

16. Charles Mix County Game Production Area Land Donation [\[Wildlife: Info Item\]](#)

Ryan Wendinger, Habitat Program Administrator, presented Curtis R. Kaberna willed GFP 80 acres of property located near Delmont in Charles Mix County. Per the will the property must be used for wildlife management and public hunting purposes and be identified as the Curtis R. Kaberna Game Production Area. The property currently has 75 acres enrolled in CRP through 2032 and has great habitat cover. Public notices have been issued regarding the 30 day public comment period. The Commission will be asked to take action at the December meeting to accept the property donation.

17. Cotton Slough Land Exchange [\[Wildlife: Info Item\]](#)

Ryan Wendinger, Habitat Program Administrator, gave an overview of the Cotton Slough Game Production Area is located northeast of Lake Kampeska by Watertown. The department has worked with local landowners on an exchange that would trade 12.32 acres that is difficult for the public to access and use for 21.64 acres of property. These properties are of equal value determined by an appraiser. The 21.64 acres that the department would acquire in the trade would be very accessible by users and allow for a GPA boundary that is located in a place it can be better maintained. The current boundary runs through some wetlands and is difficult to identify with fencing and signage for users. The 30 day comment period is open following the public notices that went out and the Commission will be asked to take action at the December meeting to approve the exchange.

18. Introduction of Newton Hills Game Production Area [\[Wildlife: Info Item\]](#)

Ryan Wendinger, Habitat Program Administrator, provided an overview on how the department along side The Conservation Fund worked together to acquire 222 acres from the Boy Scouts of America near Newton Hills State Park back in 2021. The Conservation Fund has been holding the property since then and aiding the department in applications for the U.S. Forest Service Forest Legacy Program Grant. After two years of applying for the grant, we were successful in an award of \$1.49 million towards the acquisition. Closing took place in September deeding the property over to GFP from The Conservation Fund. The Parks Division acquired around 46 acres to adjoin the Newton Hills State Park and the Wildlife Division acquired the remaining 176 acres to serve as a game production area that will adjoin the Johnson and McKee GPAs. Many thanks were given to all the agencies involved that include the Boy Scouts of America, SD DANR, U.S. Forest Service, the National Wild Turkey Federation, and The Conservation Fund who we can't thank enough for all their help in this acquisition.

19. Bighorn Sheep Herd Health Update [\[Wildlife: Info Item\]](#)

John Kanta, Administrator, gave a brief presentation on how GFP is currently managing or cooperatively managing six bighorn sheep herds in South Dakota. The current minimum population estimate is 400 bighorn sheep across all herds. The Hell Canyon herd suffered a pneumonia die off early in 2024 and lost approximately 50% of the animals in the herd. The good news is that since March no bighorn sheep have died, and lamb recruitment has been good indicating that pneumonia is not persisting in the herd.

20. Aquatic Invasive Species Update [\[Wildlife: Info Item\]](#)

Jake Davis, Fisheries Program Administrator, presented to the Commission a summary of the 2024 AIS program. Outreach and education efforts remain the primary tool to slow the spread of AIS by providing users with information needed to practice Clean, Drain, Dry. In total, 22,165 watercraft inspections occurred from May-October. Partnerships also continued with federal and state agencies, as well as NGO's and Lake



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Associations. New zebra mussel confirmed water in 2024 included Pelican Lake, North Rush/Minnewasta complex and Bullhead Lake (Marshall Co.).

21. Department Organized Youth Hunts

[Wildlife: Info Item]

Law Enforcement Section Chief Sam Schelhaas provided information on youth hunts that are hosted by the Department. Primarily hunts that are organized and spearheaded by conservation officers. Schelhaas shared information and pictures on 3 youth waterfowl hunts that took place and what the process is like. Schelhaas also talked about some spring turkey hunts and youth deer hunts that are done around the state targeting youth that have never hunted those species.

22. License Sales Reports

[Wildlife: Info Item]

Director Kirschenmann provided the Commission an update on license sales. From the beginning of the license year (December 15, 2024) through the end of the October, licenses sales for both small game and fishing remain strong. Resident licenses which provide the opportunity to harvest pheasants continues to grow and at the highest levels in the past five years. Nonresident small game licenses are higher than last year's sales.

23. Adjourn

[Action Item]

A Regular Commission Meeting will be held on December 5, 2024, at the South Dakota State Capitol Building, Room 414, starting at 1 pm CST.

MOTIONED BY THEEL, SECONDED BY BARTLING TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 4:59 PM CST ON NOVEMBER 7, 2024. Motion carried unanimously.

Submitted respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kevin Robling". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Kevin Robling, Department Secretary