



Commission Meeting Minutes

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks

523 E Capitol Avenue | Pierre, South Dakota 57501

October 9, 2025 | Beeler Community Center | Lemmon, SD

REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING

Call Meeting to Order

Chair Rissler called the meeting to order at 1:17 pm MT at the Beeler Community Center, in Lemmon, SD on October 9, 2025. Commissioners Stephanie Rissler, Jon Locken, Jim White, Travis Bies, Bruce Cull and Julie Bartling were in attendance. With six 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 50 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 September 2025 meeting. Minutes are available at <https://gfp.sd.gov/commission/archives/>.

MOTIONED BY CULL, SECONDED BY BARTLING TO APPROVE THE SEPTEMBER 2025 REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES. The motion carried unanimously.

3. Additional Salary Days [Action Item]

Chair Rissler called for additional salary days from the Commissioners. Two additional salary days were approved for Commissioner Cull for attending South Dakota Parks and Wildlife Foundation Meetings.

MOTIONED BY LOCKEN, SECONDED BY BIES TO APPROVE THE ADDITIONAL SALARY DAYS. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Staff Introductions [Info Item]

Jeff VanMeeteren, Director of Parks & Recreation, introduced two new employees, Tate Lies who serves as the Equipment Technician out of the Black Hills Trails Office in Lead and Haylee South who serves as the Assistant Park Manager at Angostura Recreation Area.

Tom Kirschenmann, Director Wildlife Division, introduced two new staff members to the Division. Those new staff include Molly Boyum, Naturalist at the Outdoor Campus West in Rapid City and Nick Preble, Habitat Conservation Technician at the Ft. Pierre office.

Public Hearing

No Public Hearing was held as there were no finalizations on October's meeting agenda.

Open Forum

Senior Staff Attorney Nick Michels opened the floor at 1:55 pm MT for discussion from those in attendance and online in matters of importance to them that are listed on the agenda, not as a finalization or may not be on the agenda.

There was not anyone online or in person requesting to testify in the open form.

Senior Staff Attorney Michels closed the open forum at 1:57 pm MT.



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5&6. Custer State Park Trophy Bison Bull Harvest & Non-trophy Bison Bull Harvest

[Action Item: Proposal]

Jeff VanMeeteren, Director of Parks & Recreation, proposed a rule package for the Custer State Park Bison Bull hunts that initiated from a citizen petition requesting a 60% resident only preference in the first draw with the remaining 40% of the licenses being open to both residents and non-residents. Additionally, park staff evaluated the bison herd and range health and set a new maximum number of bison bull licenses at 15 for Trophy and 30 for Non-trophy that could be issued on an annual basis. The desire to increase these bison license opportunities comes from a growing demand for these hunting licenses along with having a healthy herd.

MOTIONED BY CULL, SECONDED BY BARTLING TO ACCEPT THE PROPOSAL WITH THE FINALIZATION BEING PRESENTED IN NOVEMBER. The motion carried unanimously.

7. Custer State Park 60th Buffalo Roundup & Tourism Promotional Videos [Info Item: Parks]

Matt Snyder Regional Park Supervisor gave a presentation updating the Commission on the 27th Annual Mickelson Trail Trek and the 60th Buffalo Round Up. The Mickelson Trail Trek was held September 19-21 with 580 registered riders. The riders experienced beautiful fall weather and excellent trail conditions. Staff received many compliments on trail conditions and overall coordination of the event. This year's ride saw 60% of the riders on e-bikes vs. 40% on traditional bikes.

The 60th Buffalo Round Up and 32nd Arts Festival was held September 25-27. The Round Up saw a large crowd of over 22,000 spectators to watch the wranglers bring in 1,400 bison. The day was plenty warm, but the event went smoothly. Staff worked with South Dakota Public Broadcasting again this year and added a radio station 1700 AM. Information about the event was broadcasted as well as a play-by-play action of the Round Up. It was very well received. Also, more spectators experienced visiting the corral complex after the Round Up. The 32nd Arts Festival did experience record attendance at 19,225 visitors and vendors at 168 over the three days. Local digital marketing showcasing the event contributed to the success. Great weather and a great line up of entertainment made for a great fall weekend in Custer State Park.

8. Custer State Park Resort Lease Update

[Info Item: Parks]

Sean Blanchette, Parks Division Business Administrator, provided an update to the Custer State Park Resorts RFP preparation process. GFP has entered a contract with Axias Inc., from the 6 proposals received by the Department. Blanchette shared background information on Axias and indicated that site visits have begun with 1/3 of the structures inspected. A final report From Axias is due in January, with the information to be incorporated into the upcoming concession lease RFP. Blanchette stated that GFP is currently finalizing contracts for both the Possessory Interest appraisal and Personal Property valuation. Both contracts will be finalized in the very near future with reports to be delivered by the end of the year. Blanchette also reminded the Commission of the target timeline for releasing the Concession opportunity RFP in February 2026.

9. 2026 Marketing Theme

[Info Item: Parks]

Jeff VanMeeteren, Director of Parks & Recreation, introduced the marketing theme concept for the 2026 season that will celebrate the nation's 250th anniversary. A committee of park staff are diligently working on a slogan, activities and events that will be promoted in the 2026 season to draw additional park users into State Parks.



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10. September Park Camping Unit and Revenue Reports

[Info Item: Parks]

Jeff VanMeeteren, Director of Parks & Recreation, presented the September monthly and year-to-date report numbers for the Division of Parks & Recreation related to camping units and revenue. September camping units were down 14% for the month and 5% YTD. The Parks Division revenue is up 10% overall for the month of September and 17% YTD. Park entrance license sales remain very strong especially daily license sales in general at Custer State Park specifically. The standard graphs and charts were shared with the Commission to depict how park revenue has come in for the Division overall and the impact of the new non-resident park entrance license fees as compared to other entrance fees.

11. Mentored Hunting Process

[Info Item: Wildlife]

Chad Switzer, Wildlife Deputy Director, provided an update on the changes made by legislation and the GFP Commission for the mentoring hunting program that were implemented July 1, 2025. Communicating the changes to our customers is a huge priority, including social media, GFP website, email to customers, and directly assisting customers with developing a profile for the mentee, and linking accounts with parents or mentors, and purchasing the mentored license.

12. Pete Lien and Sons Shooting Complex

[Info Item: Wildlife]

John Kanta, Terrestrial Section Chief, and Mike Klosowski, Regional Wildlife Supervisor, provided an update on the Pete Lien & Sons Shooting Sports Complex and highlighted construction progress and the success of the first large match USPSA Area 3 Championship. The event drew 324 competitors from 14 states and Canada, featuring 17 unique stages and approximately 130,000–140,000 rounds fired over the course of the competition. Participants ranged from professional shooters to first-time competitors, demonstrating the wide appeal and accessibility of the event. Supporting video such as drone footage, a young shooter spotlight, and participant testimonials showcased the positive experience and impact of the range.

13. Pheasant Hunting Outreach Efforts

[Info Item: Wildlife]

Nick Harrington, Communications Manager, provided an update on the department's pheasant hunting outreach efforts in preparation for the coming season. Harrington discussed the department's Upland Outlook, partnership with Travel South Dakota and regional tourism agencies, and detailed initiatives including Hunt the Greatest, Rooster Rush, and A Pheasant's Year social media series. Harrington stressed the department is excited for this season, and sharing this message with hunters through multiple channels and platforms.

14. Public Access Areas

[Info Item: Wildlife]

Mark Norton, Hunting Access and Farm Bill Coordinator presented an update on the state's public access areas. GFP Habitat staff and partners across the state continue building relationships with private landowners and enrolling more private land into public hunting access programs than ever. For the fall of 2025 the Big Sioux River Watershed CREP will have over 4,600 acres enrolled, the James River Watershed CREP will have over 86,000 acres enrolled, the Elk Hunting Access Area has over 100,000 acres enrolled, the Lower Oahe Waterfowl Access Area has over 25,000 acres enrolled, the Controlled Hunting Access Program has over 28,000 acres enrolled, and the Walk-in Area program has over 1.4 million acres enrolled. Combining all private land enrolled in these public hunting access programs sets a record of over 1.66 million acres in 2025. GFP has also provided public access to over 40,000 acres of previously land-locked public land in 2025.

15. License Sales Update

[Info Items: Wildlife]

Director Kirschenmann provided a quick review of license sales, focusing on fishing and small game hunting licenses. Overall license sales remain good. Kirschenmann described how the department will monitor



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licenses sales over opening weekend which typically provides an indicator of participation and sales for the remainder of the year.

16. Adjourn

[Action Item]

A Regular Commission Meeting will be held via zoom webinar on November 6, 2025, at 2pm MT and at the Outdoor Campus West, in Rapid City, SD starting at 8 am MT on November 7, 2025.

MOTIONED BY BIES, SECONDED BY BARTLING TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 3:54 PM MT ON OCTOBER 9, 2025. Motion carried unanimously.

Submitted respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kevin Robling". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light blue horizontal line.

Kevin Robling, Department Secretary