

# Public Comments

## Elk Season

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**Kelly Koistinen**

**Spearfish SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Why is the Commission making a proposal to increase tag numbers? This should be done by the game biologists, who are the ones who can determine the carrying capacity of each unit/BHNF? It appears to me that the commission is pushing to do this from pressure of the public, not because of science! Does this proposal align with the Elk Plan developed a few years back? Aren't adjustments supposed to be made only, after the Elk Plan reaches maturity? The G,F,&P Commission should not be trying to change the carrying capacity of the units/seasons! They are not the people who know a thing about carrying capacity! The Big Game Biologists are the ones who should making determinations on how many elk the Black Hills Rifle/Praire/Archery/CSP can sustain. THERE SHOULD NOT BE A PROPOSAL TO INCREASE ANY TAGS WHATSOEVER, BEFORE THE BIOLOGISTS KNOW WHAT THE POPULATION IS! The quality of the elk hunt will be terrible with all the extra people hunting during the seasons! Think about that! The more people you have out there, the more the elk will be on the run! They will be chased across state lines, onto private lands, where no-one will be able to go hunt, they will be running around with their tongues hanging out! To me that is not a quality hunt! This is not science based, just plain old money for the State, guaranteed! Thus, I oppose the increase of tag numbers as it is not science based at the time of the proposal! Those on that commission have no business trying to propose this change!

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**Ryan Patterson**

**Aberdeen SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I am opposed of you guys giving out more tags. You guys did that a few years back and it really hurt the quantity and quality of the elk herds. This last year was probably one of the best years that I have seen for guys getting great bulls. Bulls that SD should want their residents to get. SD should have 330-380 bulls easily and we do but I think we can do better. Please reconsider raising the elk tags and leave them where they are at or even drop the tags down a little. Thank you

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**Tyson Allen**

**Mitchell SD**

**Position:** other

**Comment:**

I believe the addition of elk licenses in all seasons is a bad idea for the herd of South Dakota. As South Dakota residents know that have hunted elk with either their tag or someone else's tag, that South Dakota has one of the highest quality of elk to hunt. By increasing the number of licenses, this will then decrease the overall quality of elk that are harvested yearly. Over time we will guarantee see a decrease in the quality of bulls taken out of South Dakota (as an overall average). Look at all of the states that have increased the number of tags in units and you'll see that the overall quality of the bulls goes down. I think leaving the number of tags of "any elk" should be left the way it is.

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**James Riis**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** other

**Comment:**

Local landowners have a lot of elk on their pastures & hay this time of year in the newest unit by Hill City. They would like to see more cow tags made available to reduce the herd.

## Lake Francis Case Walleye Regulations

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**Todd Hoffman**

**Fairfax SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

You want to regulate walleye fishing for the better. think about regulating fishing during the walleye span . Alot of neighboring states don't allow it. Its ruining our river for fishing. In other words your fishing our river empty by allowing this everyyear

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**Kyle Goodmanson**

**Yankton SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

The first four fish through the ice is plenty. If you allow the locals that fish every single day during the ice season on Francis Case to sort it will result in additional fish loss for no good reason.

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**Brian Fowlds**

**Tea SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

First off I do not understand the difference between catching walleye/sauger in July/August versus January/February. Baratrauma is baratrauma. I believe the law in the summer time throughout the State is one walleye/sauger over 20" in a persons possession, except ice fishing on Lake Francis Case within a certain boundary and maybe a few other exceptions. As far as I am concerned I believe the one over 20" should be in effect year round. I am no biologist by no means but logic tells me that if the fish is in the water it has a better chance to survive and reproduce. I believe the philosophy behind the current law is to prevent fish caught in deep water to be returned and later die. The proposal I have heard about is the complete opposite of this philosophy. I believe at the very least the law should stay the same or as an improvement have the same laws as we have to abide by in the summer months. If I had my way I would say you are done fishing when you catch one over 20" no matter how many fish you have in your possession, but I can see nobody but myself and a few others going along with that.

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**Doug Dobesh**

**Spearfish SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Quit catering to the tourism department and start acting like a department that is SUPPOSED to be acting in the best interest of ALL sportsmen. Off topic, but is long past the time to close walleye fishing to non-residents through the spawning period. Once again, catering to the tourism department.

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**Tom Steinhauser**

**Platte SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

I support the change in the petition as this is a social regulation and not biological. This is the only area in the state of South Dakota that has this regulation. People are not following this regulation and we are losing fellow ice fisherman to this area as they do not want to have to keep a 6 inch walleye and the first four walleye they catch.

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**Rocky Niewenhuis**

**Mitchell SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

Agree with changing this rule. No other body of water in SD has these regulations and there are deeper waters then down in the platte area.

Thank you for your consideration, also for all you folks do for outdoors in our state.

Thanks. Rocky

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**Ken Edel**

**Rapid City SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

This regulation was implemented 20 years ago in response to anglers concern over releasing fish experiencing barotrauma. This a condition most fish experience when brought up from depths of 30 feet or more. This regulation could apply to all of our South Dakota lakes with depths of 30' or more, winter and summer. In the last 20 years progress has been made on methods and devices to release fish back to the depths successfully. Angler education is the key for anglers to understand how to release and save these fish experiencing barotrauma.

# Lake Vermillion SE Boat Ramp PEL Requirement

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**Stevev Munson**

**Sioux Falls SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

I would support including this in the license fee if there was public input on the decision to upgrade the boat ramp and parking lot. If not then you should get pushback on the proposed fee change.

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**Jake Droge**

**Humboldt SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

I would assume most who use it already have a park sticker so probably not a huge chain for those that have a pass. My thought is if you use it then you can help pay for it.

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**Todd Deneui**

**Canistota SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

No comment text provided.

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**Ann Burg**

**Sioux Falls SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

I think that is a fair and understandable request.

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**Timothy Kueter**

**Humboldt SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

No.

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**Anthony Steffensen**

**Hartford SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I strongly oppose this, not having a public non-fee boat ramp entrance into Lake Vermillion. The ability to enter a public body of water without added fees would diminish how many visitors use the lake. I enjoy riding my motorcycle to the east ramp and just watch the boaters, sunsets, etc. I do not want to pay a park fee to enjoy this. I pay property taxes to fund the GFP and adding another revenue/use fee will not lower my taxes. There are fewer and fewer free access points, and adding another one I cannot support.  
Thank you

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**Brett Kantack**

**Sioux Falls SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

CANNOT AFFORD A STATE PARK PERMIT IN THIS ECONOMY.

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**Bryan Luke**

**Marion SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

No comment text provided.

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**Chad Grev**

**Sioux Falls SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

No comment text provided.

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**Brywn Ractliffe**

**Canton SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Having a public ramp that dose not require a state park sticker is key to allowing people to exercise their right to the PUBLIC water.

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**Nathan Nowak**

**Canistota SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Including that ramp in state park is just going to drive that recreational traffic to Wall Lake. People use that ramp because it is a low cost option for families looking to enjoy a day in the outdoors that otherwise couldn't justify the already overpriced day or season pass.

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**Wade Schrank**

**Salem SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

1. The rest of the the Lake Vermillion recreation area is a paid entrance. On both sides of lake so make the boat ramp a required pay area.
2. This will cut down on the pressure from jet skiers from Sioux Falls coming there and using the facilities that the rest of us have to pay for.

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**Shaun Feilmeier**

**Canton SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

I want GFP to continue to manage and improve our recreation areas. That doesn't come cheap. Users should pay for an annual park pass so these improvements aren't as much of a tax burden. More fishing opportunity and water access is a must for wellbeing and job force recruitment to the area. I want a South Dakota with a strong outdoor recreational heritage. I'm willing to pay for that future.

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**Paul Tunge**

**Monroe SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

Needs fish cleaning station that side also

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**Bradley Tunge**

**Sioux Falls SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

No comment text provided.

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**Bradley Tunge**

**Sioux Falls SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

No comment text provided.

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**Sara Kaltenbach**

**Canistota SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

No comment text provided.

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**Russell Meyer**

**Sioux Falls SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

They already have a paid boat ramp there they don't need another one, besides I don't camp so I don't by a state entrance second I already paid for hunting and fishing license, and a license for my boat and trailer, I'll just not fish there anymore.

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**Randy Lee**

**Hartford SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I think it is wrong that the state tries to take away everything from the people of SD that just want to have a few days of enjoyment at the lake. The same people that already pay taxes to the state. You would think that with all the property taxes we pay to SD the state could afford to give back a little place like the Lake Vermillion boat ramp.

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**Harlen Schroeder**

**Salem SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Being a boat owner, I enjoy being on the water myself with family and friends. I do not use the camp sites at any time. So, Why am I forced to purchase a park sticker, just to be able to unload my boat. By having to register and insure my boat every year I feel that we are square without being forced to purchase a park sticker. Before this there was little maintenance done at Lake Vermillion's SE boat dock. There were times that we had to load and unload in the area which had large rocks. With the cost of everything, I feel that we should be able to load and unload without a Park sticker and enjoy some family time.

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**Kyle Weeg**

**Baltic SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

No comment text provided.

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## Missouri River Pierre Waterfowl Refuge

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**Jacob Laube**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I feel this would higy reduce opportunities to hunt. I also dont think making it a refuge would keep any extra burds in the area. This would only benefit people with the opportunities to hunt fields.

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**Paul Menning**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

No comment text provided.

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**Jason Kinsman**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

This would limit access to public hunting in one of the few places birds are where the public can be successful. It would only benefit land owners who want people to pay to hunt and with waterfowl migration patterns as they have been the last decade there are no geese until the last 2 weeks of the season anyway. Eliminating practically any opportunity for people without land to enjoy a waterfowl hunt. While hunting ditches is fine an opportunity to hunt the water allows a hunter the ability to make clean close kills without worry of vehicles coming and screwing up a flock. To eliminate this area for public hunting would not only inhibit the public who pays for it from enjoying it, it also has no necessity for the waterfowl that do migrate because by the time they get here the season is over. Please do not eliminate one of the few places remaining for those without land to continue raising future generations of waterfowlers.

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**Pat Malcomb**

**Sioux Falls SD**

**Position:** other

**Comment:**

I support this as long as it is a waterline refuge only, if it is a takeline refuge I appose. The pass shooters are already getting squeezed out but I like the idea of not shooting the birds off the roost.

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**Justin Allen**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

I'm in 100% support of the Missouri River Waterfowl Refuges. Especially the proposed Corps Bay to Peoria Flats Refuge. More and more birds continue to use the area which extends from the Corps Bay boat ramp to the existing Peoria Flat Refuge every year. Many of these birds end up feeding in the agriculture fields east and north. Often they supply a majority of the birds using the extremely successful Lower Oahe Access Area which is a public decoying area. Waterfowl refuges on Lake Oahe keep birds in the area. I encourage the commission to pass the proposed Corps Bay Refuge.

Thanks  
Justin Allen  
Pierre, SD

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**Nathan Morey**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

This proposal is not supported by department personnel or biological data. No evidence is presented to suggest that the proposed refuge would increase the number of waterfowl wintering in this area. Nor is any data presented to suggest hunting in proposed refuge has had the effect of pushing waterfowl out of the area.

The proposed refuge would ban waterfowl hunting in an area historically popular with duck hunters without any biological justification. This proposal will limit hunting opportunities and access to public lands. This proposal is contrary to GFPs mission and should be strongly opposed.

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**Pat Malcomb**

**Sioux Falls SD**

**Position:** other

**Comment:**

If this is anything other than a waterline refuge Pierre is going to lose business from pass shooters, I know at least 20 people who won't be going to pierre hunting if this is more than waterline refuge, ask the motel owners and other business owners how they feel about this.

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**Rodney Larson**

**Sioux Falls SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

With the nearly annoying number of geese in town and the large amounts of feces at the capitol and Parks, it's being proposed that someone wants more? By increasing the refugue size you will accomplish this. I was hunting in Pierre last week on Friday Saturday and Sunday and am right now booking my next three day hunt starting tomorrow. I keep coming to Pierre when I'm successful at hunting geese. To be successful you have to improvise and change the area and strategy. If you remove areas available to hunt you will accomplish two things.... more metro geese and less hunters. In an economic perspective, last week I was a great tourist to Pierre. Spending money at McDonald's twice, Hardee's twice, pizza ranch twice, cattlemens one, mad marys, jakes,Dakota mart twice, runnings, country inn and suites, and several gas station/ convenience stores. This is obviously driven by pay to hunt organizations. Probably the same type of organizations wanting to take away road hunting privileges for pheasant hunters.

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**Harry Decker**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I am against the proposed waterfowl refuges. This proposal decreases access to public land and public water and reduces opportunities. If we are going to recruit, retain and reactivate hunters, we can't further restrict them by taking away areas where they can hunt. Please do not eliminate access and opportunity on existing public land and public water.

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**Jesse Flottmeyer**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

You're taking prime hunting area away from guys that like to hunt the waterline. It only benefits the guys that own land so the can field hunt when large flocks of geese are now safe in these areas.

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**Eric Paulson**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I'm all for more refuges on Oahe and Sharpe. It gets old watching boat hunters scare away thousands of birds from a roost with their boats. In my opinion Mailshack needs to be a refuge closed to boating starting November 1 but that's not part of this proposal. But the Corp Bay one in question needs to be a waterline refuge and not a water and land refuge.

If you add the Corp land into the refuge, you will essentially kill all non-landowner pass shooting opportunities for miles on Lake Oahe. I hunt along Corp Bay quite a bit and I see others that do as well. If you take that away, there were no other good opportunities in winter of 2019-2020 on Oahe. If you take that away there literally is no pass shooting opportunities for miles given the cattle and houses that are popping up along 1804 now. You can't sit in the road ditch along 1804 and Corp bay anymore because then you'd get dinged for safety violations. So opportunities have already been naturally reduced for hunters in the area.

We hear the 3 R's talked about all the time at the GFP meetings and how important it is to give opportunity to everyone, especially youth hunters, and that retention of hunters is an issue. With this proposal you'll take away thousands of acres of access to everyone, adults, youth, residents and non-residents alike. Recruitment and retention will become harder if you take away some of the last true Lake Oahe pass shooting/bluff hunting opportunities there is. At least with a waterline refuge you're just saying the birds get to rest in peace, go shoot from the bluffs and still allowing people the opportunity to hunt.

With as few geese that come through the river anymore, compared to 10+ years ago, you take away Corp Bay bluff hunting and you take away a majority of the pass shooting opportunities along the river where the geese actually stage. There's a lot of Corp land open to hunting, I'll give you that. But how much of it, that actually could be used to harvest a goose, can actually be accessed without crossing private land or hiking a couple miles? Not much.

You can see it firsthand right now, or as of last weekend you could. The Corp Bay geese were so far from any public access point that unless you were willing to walk about 2 miles around from the east shore boat ramp, you wouldn't have come close to where the birds were roosting. Most of the geese flew east or northeast and by the time the shooters were getting into them they were a mile and a half or 2 miles from the closest roost. The boat out driving around busting the roosts was the one doing the damage.

I would urge you to modify the request in front of you and take the land out from the waterfowl refuge and make it just a waterline refuge. That way you accomplish the goal of the petition, to create a safe haven for the birds, yet hunters can continue to pass shoot up on the bluffs. Hunters up on the bluffs aren't the ones scaring the birds off the water, its the boats.

Thanks for reading my comments,  
Eric

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**Roger Novotny**

**Fort Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Waterfowl hunting is a difficult sport and adding more refuges seems counterproductive in trying to salvage that hunting culture. I am not sure who is "behind" the move, but I strongly oppose any further expansion.

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**Steven Novotny**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

From a sportsman's standpoint and biological standpoint this is not needed or supported based on my observations. I strongly support the need for refuges and areas for all animals (including waterfowl) to have a safe haven. For years the amount of refuge area has been disputed and at times it has increased and at times decreased. Currently there are far few birds wintering or seeking refuge in central SD than any of the past 10 years. The current refuge areas available seem than adequately to meet the needs of declining numbers of waterfowl wintering in SD.

At a time of continued concern with hunting access or opportunity, closing areas of public access seems counterproductive? I would be curious to understand the logic or biology that supports expanding these areas? Until I see the data or thoughts that support expanding these areas I'm strongly against adding additional refuges.

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**Ryan Cumbow**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

See attached document

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**Dalton Decker**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I am opposed to decreasing the public hunting opportunity on public lands and waters.

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**Tony Rislov**

**San Jose CA**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

No comment text provided.

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**Matt Englund**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

No comment text provided.

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**Emily Decker**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

No comment text provided.

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**Jeffrey Liudahl**

**Grenville SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Leave the Waterfowl refuge alone!!! The trend nationwide is to expand hunting opportunities, not take them away. DUMB IDEA.

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**Torey Garrett**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

No comment text provided.

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**Mark Pererson**

**Aberdeen SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Decreases public hunting opportunities

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**Kevin Goeden**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

No comment text provided.

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**Tom Viet**

**Renner SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

This seems like a very bad recommendation by a group that only supports one style of hunting and is tryin to corporatize something. What is this accomplishing, the days when SD was holding massive amounts of fowl in the area these refuges were not in place, Goose numbers in Pierre and SD are directly related to climate and Migration patterns, not refuges. How would installing refuges help support the growth of hunting? This just eliminates a location for hunting to take place, I personally use this area for hunting every fall along with a vast amount of other hunters, Lets keep waterfowl hunting for all, not just corporate/private hunting groups.

Thanks

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**Larry Melvin**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I believe the existing water refuges are sufficient for the amount of waterfowl the Pierre area gets. The proposal would make it difficult for boat hunters to have safer areas closer to town to access.

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**Bronson Blow**

**Ft. Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

No comment text provided.

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**Chris Jackson**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

Dear Commission,

I'm in total support of the proposed refuge from the dam to Corps Bay and Peoria Flat Area. 99% of the birds harvested near the area are from decoy hunters and pass shooters. It makes perfect sense to protect the birds on the water in order to keep birds in the area so countless people can hunt the birds off the water. In addition birds that use the Corps Bay Area often use the public hunting areas to the NE. If GFP is going to spend a 100k a year leasing the hunting rights isn't it the best interest to have as many birds as possible using it? Please pass the proposed refuge.

Thanks for your time, Chris

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**Pat Malcomb**

**Sioux Falls SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

After seeing the proposed boundaries I cannot support this proposal, while I agree that birds should not be bothered on the roost I see no reason to shut down the land. The pass shooters do not hurt the decoy hunters, I would in fact argue that hunting every field has just as much negative impact on the geese as the boat hunters do. They have no place to feed they will leave as well. I really don't get the reason for closing the stretch from Laframboise Island to Farm Island to pass shooters a lot of the older hunters go there because its easy to hunt. As a goose hunter I have been hunting the Pierre area for over 40 years and the pass shooter keeps getting squeezed out to the point that we won't go to Pierre anymore you are going to have less hunters in the field not more and I can't imagine the local businesses would get behind that. I think the deer hunters hunting by boat and the fisherman mess with the geese more than the pass shooters. If this passes I for one will not be hunting or fishing the Pierre area anymore.

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**Paul Tunge**

**Monroe SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Leave as is

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**John Fuglsang**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I am very opposed to this proposed waterfowl refuge expansion.

Above the dam - this is one of the few areas that typically has waterfowl in the area where the public ground along the reservoir is accessible by land. Removing this opportunity would have a dramatic impact on the availability of public hunting for waterfowl. Keep in mind that most of the land in the LOWAA is rented and that could all go away in the future. You also need a trailer full of decoys to have much of a chance to decoy birds on the LOWAA areas.

Below the dam-the expansion would also have a big impact on public waterfowl opportunities. There are several small islands in that area that provide hunting opportunities for those with smaller boats. It would also crowd everyone into the Antelope Creek area resulting in a diminished hunting experience for all.

I could go on with additional arguments why this is a bad idea but this is probably already to long.

In summary, this proposal would have very negative impacts on my waterfowl hunting and it would also have a very negative impact on retaining and recruiting waterfowl hunters.

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**Rodney Larson**

**Sioux Falls SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Geese need to be viewed as a renewable natural resource. Create a huge refuge and you will hold geese here until the weather pushes them to nebraska where they can hunt them at will. Like water above the dam, hold it back but when you let it go...off to Nebraska it goes. I have hunted Pierre geese my whole life. I'm guessing this is being proposed by the pay to hunt organizations that feel there style of hunting is more valued than the guys that sit in the trees or bluffs. I spend a lot of money in Pierre every year and I know it turns over in that town many times and each time it passes hands, taxes are gained by the state. I have hunted in a pay to hunt pit and didn't care for it but, I know, you know and everyone knows that that industry is heavily paid in cash with no tax money gained. Probably why they try so hard to shut down the bluff hunters. Also I was hunting the trees on the East side last weekend and saw numerous local elderly guys up there. I visited with them on the subject and they don't like it either saying they would probably quit goose hunting.

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**Michael Merriman**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Passing this would take away a great deal of waterfowl hunting opportunity in the Pierre area. Many people in the Pierre area and the state travel to the Pierre area to Hunt waterfowl in these areas. Closing these areas to hunting will do nothing but anger people and decrease hunter opportunity. I urge you to take a strong look at what closing these area will mean for the hunters of this state.

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**Kevin Blachford**

**Miller SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

No comment text provided.

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**Wyatt Wilson**

**Westport SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

No comment text provided.

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**Jill Fenderson**

**Sioux Falls SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

This proposal seems like it will only benefits land owners, in particular those who charge for hunting. Goose hunting on public land is a challenging enough sport for pass shooters without these continued land limitations. Our older generation of pass shooting hunters in particular will be very challenged by this due to limited mobility, not to mention many living on fixed incomes who can't afford to pay for their hunts.

A better option for the Commission to consider would be a water line refuge. This would allow continued hunting on Corps land while still giving the birds a protected resting place. In addition, it would help enforce the 'no disturbances towards resting waterfowl' rules. I have witnessed boats spooking the birds and completely ruining hunts for many pass shooters.

Many hunters feel this proposal favors Landowners who have these refuges border their property many who charge for hunting. Pay hunting can be a very controversial topic amongst many long time pass shoot hunters who have had this tradition handed down through several Generations of their Families. The revenue from hunting public land is intended to financially benefit the citizens of the community and our State, not pad the pockets of a chosen few.

A refuge is a good idea but its main purpose should be wildlife protection. A water refuge would do this as well as help ensure the continuation of non-pay pass shooting options in the area.

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**Chad Vinatieri**

**Sioux Falls SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

This proposal will only benefits land owners, in particular those who charge for hunting. Goose hunting on public land is difficult enough sport without these continued land limitations. Our older generation of hunters will be very challenged by this due to limited mobility, not to mention many living on fixed incomes who can't afford to pay for their hunts.

A better option for the Commission to consider would be a water line refuge. This would allow continued hunting on Corps land while still giving the birds a protected resting place. In addition, it would help enforce the 'no disturbances towards resting waterfowl' rules.

Many hunters feel this proposal favors Landowners who have these refuges border their property many who charge for hunting. Pay hunting is very controversial topic amongst many hunters who have had this tradition handed down through several Generations of their Families. The revenue from hunting public land is intended to financially benefit the citizens that get to use it.

A refuge is a good idea but its main purpose should be wildlife protection. A water refuge would do this as well as help ensure the continuation of non-pay pass shooting options in the area.

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**Renee Allen**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

I support the new waterfowl refuge on the Missouri River. Protect the resting areas on Oahe. Keeping the birds safe on the water provides hunting opps for hundreds or decoyers and pass shooters in the surrounding areas.

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**Cody Nipp**

**Aberdeen SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

No comment text provided.

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**Rick Anderson**

**Gettysburg SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

I love the proposal to add the new waterfowl refuge on Lower Oahe. I'm a avid pass shooter and love coming down to the Pierre area to hunt. I understand the proposal will prohibit me from hunting in some areas but I believe the proposal will keep more birds in the area for longer and provide more hunting for longer for everyone. Water hunters still have 95% of the rest of the lake to hunt and there isn't many of them anyways. Please pass the proposal, thanks

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**Thomas Jansen**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

I'm emailing in support of the expanded waterfowl refuge on Lake Oahe and from Pierre downstream. Thanks

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**Leonard Spomer**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Chairman Olson, and Commission Members

The proposed expansion of the Pierre Waterfowl refuge would be a travesty to waterfowl hunters not only from the Pierre area, but from across the State. This proposal would take away the only hunting option for many residents to pass shoot geese and occasional ducks. Furthermore, this proposal would encompass approximately 2700-3000 acres of State GPA lands. This is land that the Department pays taxes on with hunting license fees and Habitat Stamp funds. I have included below statements from the Departments Mission Statement, and also from an article in the Winter issue of the Conservation Digest.

Please vote NO on this proposed expansion.

Sincerely

GF&P Goals from the Departments Mission Statement

Habitat and Access

We will expand and create new partnerships with landowners and conservation groups and remain focused on improving existing aquatic and terrestrial habitat on private and public lands while seeking additional habitat acres. Furthermore, we will enhance South Dakota's strong outdoor heritage by providing additional public access to privately owned lands while continuously improving access to existing public lands.

Asset Management

We will provide superior outdoor recreational experiences by showcasing South Dakota's natural landscapes and world class state park system while ensuring sustainability of the resource and actively recruit, retain, and reactivate outdoor enthusiasts.

Winter 2022, SD Conservation Digest, page 8 "Habit Stamp Project Overview"

On page 10 under "improving waterfowl hunting access on game production areas"

A vast majority of GPA's, across eastern and central SD offer some degree of waterfowl hunting opportunity, and are thus extremely important to waterfowl hunters who, according to GF&P surveys, indicate they hunt on public lands much of the time. So, whether hunting from a boat in waders over decoys, or finding the right place and right time to pass shoot migrating flocks of geese. GPA's play an important role in both maintaining the waterfowl hunting tradition and providing opportunities to recruit new waterfowl hunters into the ranks.

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**Edward Keller**

**Aberdeen SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Limiting public access, does Not improve Hunting quality for the citizens of South Dakota.

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**Randy Schaefer**

**Madison SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

The current refuge boundary system is serving its purpose well. Tens of thousands of waterfowl are holding there through the winter hunting season already and offering lots of opportunity for public land hunting on GFP managed fields. As more and more private lands are leased and/or operated for commercial hunting, our public-trust waters become more critical to maintaining public hunting access. Expanding the refuge would simply cater to commercial hunting operations along the river, and would eliminate productive public hunting access to more of our waters. NO to refuge expansion.

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**Darby Bordewyk**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Concerned that this will prevent hunting from wing dam east of refuge by Issac Walton. it is good opportunity for older and young hunters, That don't have resources to field hunt. Not everyone has decoys ,access, or physical abilities for that. Pass shooting from this point will be missed by many, out of town hunters have also used this area. It will end my goose hunting if closed.  
Thanks for the opportunity to express my concerns.

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**Travis Runia**

**Wolsey SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I oppose the proposal to close additional public water and public land to public hunting along the MO River. When environmental conditions are favorable, the area holds good numbers of waterfowl and provides good hunting opportunities on land and water. There are ample waterfowl refuges in place.

The social science is overwhelming that hunter numbers are declining because it is becoming harder to find a place to hunt, and hunters are becoming more reliant on public areas. Improving hunter access is a priority among GFP, outdoor advocacy groups, and most wildlife agencies across the country. Closing public water and public land to public hunting at the request of a private outfitter would be contradictory to these efforts.

Although the petition was presented as a way of improving land hunting by providing more water refuge, the proposal includes closing mass areas of public land to public hunting. The public land areas currently provide pass shooting opportunities. Is the true intent to remove public hunting opportunities so outfitters are more appealing?

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**Mark Malone**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

The area being proposed to add a waterfowl refuge (Peoria to Corps Bay) is one that is very important to me. This is one area that a person can utilize a lot of public land and have opportunities to be in the field chasing waterfowl. Even without this being a refuge, waterfowl uses this area frequently. The main reason waterfowl uses or doesn't use this area is always due to the weather and water level. If water is high, it doesn't get used much. If the water is low, if there are much for geese around, it is loaded, no matter the hunting pressure. The area provides me as well as many others the opportunity to chase waterfowl on public land. I don't believe adding a refuge here would enhance the local opportunities, it would reduce it. The main benefit of adding a refuge there would be to the local landowners or those who lease hunting rights right above that area. Please do not make a refuge between Peoria and Corps bay. I have already lost enough hunting spots to overcrowding, loss of habitat, etc. This would just be another disappointing addition to that list that would not keep additional geese in the area.

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**Brad Gall**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

This would be very disappointing. It would reduce my opportunity for waterfowl hunting. It seems to be more difficult to find good waterfowl hunting now and makes little sense to get rid of this area. This was an area I started in when young and gained my interest in waterfowl as it was relatively easy area to access. I would be fine to have the refuge on the water only but not the land.

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**Chuck Frost**

**Miller SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

I think the expansion of the Refuge on Lower Oahe is a step in the right direction. I support the idea. Thanks

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**Derek Ferrie**

**Mitchell SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

This proposal would do nothing to improve hunting. If anything needs to be done it would be no boating during waterfowl season. Hunting the sore line is not a issue boat traffic can be and then ALL boats off the water!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

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**Mike G Van Cleave**

**Aberdeen SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

the average person needs more places to hunt not refuges that will benefit only a few private operators.

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**Jason Taylor**

**Fort Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

The GFP says that they are concerned about the declining number of hunters, approving this proposal would only add to the reason people have stopped hunting. Approval of this proposal will Take Away some public land that gets a lot of use. Please reject this proposal.

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**Kyle Heimerl**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

OPPOSE

I oppose reducing public hunting opportunities, on public land and water to appease for-profit hunting operations. This proposal violates the Public Trust Doctrine – the principle that certain natural and cultural resources are preserved for public use, and that the government owns and must protect and maintain these resources for PUBLIC use. The proposal is a thinly-veiled attempt to eliminate public hunting in an historic waterfowl hunting area and limit access to public land so for-profit hunting operations and private land owners will have greater leverage to attract client and profit from public resources.

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**Jake Angier**

**Eugene OR**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

No comment text provided.

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**Ron Mcclelland**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

This just leaves a tiny area at Antelope Creek to hunt! This is ridiculous and sounds more like it's pushed by land owners who are trying to monopolize the hunting!

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**Brian Pauly**

**Woonsocket SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I oppose the closing of public waters and public lands to hunting, and want public waters and public lands to remain open to hunting. There is no viable biological reason for GFP to support the closing of public waters and public lands to the harvest of waterfowl, within the guidelines/limitations of state/federal laws. Closing or limiting hunting access to public waters & public lands takes away from public access opportunities, which directly contradicts the GFP strategic plan.

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**Ray McClelland**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Please stop taking things away from us. I've hunted that area since i could hunt (40+years), and I've never heard of anyone getting hurt or causing problems in that area. Enough taking away things from the public. And I would like to take my kids & grandchildren hunting there to some day!  
DON'T TAKE IT AWAY!

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**Eric Paulson**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Good Afternoon,

I already wrote one comment but I felt compelled to write one more after last night. I went pass shooting on the east side of Corp Bay, where its proposed to be shut down. And I just want to reiterate that pass shooting the bluffs is not a problem for pushing geese off. there were 4 people there, counting myself, shooting at geese passing by for about 30-45 minutes. The 4 people were from Pierre, Aberdeen, Watertown, and California.

I got my limit and snapped a picture with the dogs. If you zoom in on the picture towards the top right, you will see a pile of geese still on the water. Our shooting had zero affect on the geese on the roost.

The people that push this refuge believe these geese are theirs and the pass shooters shouldn't get an opportunity to hunt them. You would take opportunity away from people who have no impact on if the birds leave or not.

I just want to reiterate, the picture proves this point, pass shooters aren't a problem here. You can see the geese on the water/ice well after the shooting stopped for the day with no affect on the birds.

If you want to add a refuge, then lets compromise and add it as a waterline refuge so the rest of us who don't have access to private/pay to hunt land around there can still hunt the hill sides and/or the road ditch.

Thanks,  
Eric

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**Tyler Arbach**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I feel the proposal given to the commission concerning extension of the Missouri River Pierre Waterfowl Refuge seems to only target waterfowl pass shooters. It does not restrict those who decoy waterfowl, as this is not a realistic area for such hunting practices. It is just restricting opportunities for those individuals that enjoy pass shooting waterfowl in those proposed areas. This is a highly popular location for hunters looking for easily accessible areas for pass shooting waterfowl.

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**Dan Waldman**

**Aberdeen SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Leave this area open to Public Hunting. This proposal does not help the average sportsman and only helps the paid hunting operations. This is just another example of the push for more commercialization of the public resources for the benefit of a few.

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**Kyle Weeg**

**Baltic SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

No comment text provided.

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**Richard Hilgemann**

**Aberdeen SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I do not support expanding the waterfowl refuge. I think the latest changes in lack of waterfowl in the Pierre area are weather related up north and not a lack of refuge in the Pierre area. I understand the goals of this proposal I just don't believe it is the right remedy. I've been hunting geese in that region with my dad ever since I was a child. (1980s) The current situation still works.

---

**Zach Mcwayne**

**Sioux Falls SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

Please vote yes to extend the water refuge on Lower Oahe. Having come to Pierre for 30 years there is less and less birds every year. This year there is a lot of birds though and a large portion are in Corps Bay. GFP needs to protect these birds on and near the water so they continue to use the area.

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**Paul Roe**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

No comment text provided.

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**Rick Bartels**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Its been many years since I've purchased a waterfowl license, but the Steffan proposal to increase the area looks to be an attempt by the goose camps to eliminate all free access to waterfowl hunting. Seems to me Steffan has his own wallet in mind. Keep public access open as it is. Also, I opposed free hunting and fishing for tribal members, thankfully the legislatures agreed.

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**Paul Johnson**

**Sioux Falls SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I am very much opposed to expanding the refuge in the Pierre area, especially the area below the dam. For the most part these proposals would benefit a few private landowners with commercial operations and take away opportunity for those that wish to water hunt on the Missouri River. There are already numerous refuges in the Pierre area- why is an increased refuge area needed?

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**Roy Petersen**

**Fort Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I oppose the closing of this area for hunting!!!

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**David Templeton**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Pierre area used to have great goose hunting without these proposed refuges. The goose migration patterns have changed due to a variety of reasons and they no longer use the Pierre area. In my opinion, creating these new would result in very little goose number increases but loss of significant hunting opportunities.

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**Peter Koupal**

**Rapid City SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Hard for me to understand how this proposal makes sense.

Waterfowl and any game species need zones or time frames in which they can rest. But here are some of the issues I see with this proposed expansion of this refuge.

SD already has 20 waterfowl refuges on the Missouri River.....our neighbor ND has 1 and in the past few years holds much more waterfowl than SD

This proposal would increase of the refuge by 24 miles upstream and 24 miles downstream and result in an over 400% decrease in area for hunters to hunt

In a era of reduced access and lower hunter participation, this proposal would only make the recruitment and retention of both new and existing hunters all that more difficult

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**Marcus Lehman**

**Huron SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

I was made aware of the idea to create additional waterfowl refuges on Oahe and Missouri River near Pierre. I support the water portion of the proposal but not the take line all the way up to Hwy 1804. Lets give the geese somewhere to sit and be safe but still allow pass shooters to hunt along 1804. Thanks Marcus

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**Lowell Noeske**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I live a half mile away from the proposed refuge expansion on Lake Oahe. I recommend leaving the lake and public hunting the way it is. There are dozens of hunters frequenting the bluffs to hunt in late fall when the lake starts to freeze. A refuge expansion would benefit neither hunter or goose.

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**Greg Fuller**

**Fort Pierre SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

I believe that the proposed waterfowl refuge limits would increase and improve public hunting opportunity at the GF&P Registration Fields and the surrounding area. I strongly support this proposal.

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**Andy Mckay**

**Sioux Falls SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I grew up in Pierre and still return to goose hunt as much as possible when the birds are around. Public access is critical to hunting. Access to hunting that doesn't require a trailer of decoys is critical. I'd like to continue to hunt Core Bay.

More importantly, I question the entire premise that the bird numbers are down due to pressure. It seems the proposal is based on the feelings of some people.

"After years and years of declining numbers of geese coming to Pierre, we all think it's a lot of pressure, and they just don't allow these geese to sit on the ground and have a safe resting place on the water," Steffen said. "We just want to give the geese more place to sit on the water where they are protected. Keep them on the water and keep them in the area."

I feel it's a shift in the migration coupled with the fact they are growing corn along the river in places they never could 30 years ago up north. 2022 Pierre held more birds than they have in awhile, coincidence there were crop failures and drought up north while lower oaha has access to thousands of acres of irrigated corn?

The fact is these types of decisions shouldn't be made on feelings. Larry Steffan feels it's due to pressure. I feel it's the reasons I outlined above. Where's the data? Can GF&P attribute the low numbers of birds held in core, spring, okobjo, mailshack, etc. are due to pressure? What about the pressure in the fields? Or is there some broader reason we are simply no longer holding 10k birds in core bay from November on anymore? I'd argue that it's critical to figure out the why before removing public hunting access based on the gut feelings. Feels like we are arguing over scraps and not asking ourselves why we only have scraps.

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**Ross Vander Vorste**

**La Crosse WI**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I oppose any expansion of the Pierre Waterfowl Refuge. As a former, long-time Pierre resident and now out-of-state hunter, I have taken advantage of hunting opportunities in the impacted area many times.

As a young hunter, I relied on pass shooting opportunities in this area given my lack of funds to purchase field decoys and access to private fields. This includes having success hunting areas that weren't necessarily on top of the river bluffs around Corps Bay. Access to public lands throughout Corps Bay and downstream from Pierre have improved my success and enjoyment in hunting the Pierre area.

Finally, I disagree with the assumption that hunting pressure in this area has caused geese to avoid the area. Lack of snow cover and the expansion of crop farming along the river in ND must have an effect. I would like to see GF&P scientists use data related to snow cover, air temperature, landuse, and hunting pressure to see how these factors influence hunter success and bird counts in the area. The decision to expand the refuge should be based on science and not assumptions.

Thank you for allowing public comment.

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**Larry Mckay**

**Miller SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I believe Mr. Steffen's idea doesn't have the right priorities in mind. The geese are not here because they are holding up in North Dakota were over the past several years they have been opening up more land to agriculture, that and the mild weather too. If Larry is worried about pressure on the geese why doesn't he give up 15 thousand acres of his land into refuge so the birds can eat in peace. There are many hunters that don't have the access to private lands. By closing all the public land around his properties would deter many more hunters than there already has because of the dwindling numbers. Geese are a Federal bird not a State bird. Let's find a lasting solution for everybody not just a few.

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**Jonathan Schoon**

**Mitchell SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

This is a ridiculous proposal. This will give the more common hunter less access to hunting geese in the pierre area and force more hunters to hunt road ditch's with less opportunity for the less fortunate hunter that cannot afford decoys and paying someone to guide them. The best thing to do is to allow no boating or hunting from boats in these areas. I have hunted these areas for many years. The thing that gets the geese to stay here is having less Field hunting access to allow the birds to eat at some of the closer fields. The geese are already flying to Onida from bellow the dam to feed where they will not be bothered in the field.

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**Jamie Huizenga**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

The proposed waterfowl refuge from Corp Bay to Peoria Flats is one of the best ideas SD GF&P has brought forward. Please support this request.

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**Michael James**

**Brookings SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I am not opposed to making the water a refuge to give the bird's a safe place. I do oppose making all of the corp land and sdcf&p land a refuge. It would take away many opportunities for a lot of people that come from all over the state to hunt geese. I realize that views on pass shooting waterfowl have changed, but it is a rich tradition in our great state of South Dakota! Our opportunity to do this is getting less and less all the time! Please don't take anymore opportunity away! Thank you for taking the time to read this. Mike James

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**Gary Schmitgen**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

We don't need to lose any more public land along the river, it provides a place to take young hunters out with easy access. Taking away that access to the river would be counter-productive to getting more young hunters out in the field. It seems that our SDGFP is more anti-hunting than some of the other groups in our state.

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**Jason Humphrey**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I am opposed to this expansion. This takes away several areas that I like to take my daughter goose hunting at. I do not own decoys, so pass shooting geese is the only viable alternative that we have to waterfowl hunt. I have lived in Pierre 48 years and despite the pass shooting and decoy hunting that happens in the areas that are proposed for closure, geese continue to use them. This Refuge expansion is a step away from GFP's strategic plan priority that states "we will enhance South Dakota's strong outdoor heritage by providing additional public access to privately owned lands while continuously improving access to existing public lands."

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**Kris Jackson**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

Commissioners,  
As a valid waterfowl hunter from the Pierre area I'm in strong support of the new refuge proposal on Oahe and Sharpe. I'm largely a public land decoy hunter but do at times pass shoot and hunt water on Lake Oahe. A refuge by design attracts birds because of the lack of pressure. It is no surprise the current Okobojo, Spring and Mail Shack refuges hold tremendous amounts of birds every year. These refuges work and are a big part of why birds continue to use these areas. The proposed new refuge boundaries on Lower Oahe could be the same. Birds want to roost on the Corps Bay to Peoria Flats area and many years they do until a boat hunter blows them out of there. Instead of groups upon groups of decoy hunters and pass shooters hunting those birds for literally the whole season, one boat hunter blows them out of the area for one hunt. It is shame. Lets protect the roost areas on Oahe. Waterfowl refuges work period. If GFP is going to lease hunting rights for decoy hunters in the area isn't it the best interest to keep the birds that use those area safe and undisturbed on the water?

The opposition of this proposal is a few loud voices of a very small group of guys that water hunt. GFP can preserve and enhance the opportunity for the vast majority waterfowl hunters that come to the Pierre area by passing this proposal and expanding the current Missouri River refuges.

Thanks

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**Jared Buckingham**

**Rapid City SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

I received a email today about expanding the Pierre waterfowl refuges on the Missouri River. I think it is good idea and it should be supported. Refuges keep birds in the area and provide extended hunting for the vast majority of the hunters

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**Brian Korman**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I am opposed to expanding the Pierre area Waterfowl Refuge for the following reasons:

I periodically hunt on the water for ducks and geese in this area of Lake Oahe and Sharpe.

My opinion is that the Missouri River Waterfowl Refuges are prioritizing field hunting, generally conducted on private land, to the detriment of water hunting on public areas. While there are landowners that will allow hunters on their land, I feel this promotes 'pay to hunt' through guides and leasing hunting rights.

Finally I do not see the need for further restricting hunting on these lakes. The geese are already using this area and few people are hunting them on the water. These lakes are large enough that when people do hunt them here, they don't have to go far to find a 'natural' refuge off shore or in a nearby area that doesn't get hunted.

In conclusion, I don't believe that this will significantly affect goose numbers, but it will significantly reduce the amount of free public hunting options in the Pierre area.

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**Cody Warner**

**Webster SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I am writing today to express the opposition to the proposed Missouri River Waterfowl Refuge. I do not believe its in the best interest of the GFP to be removing public lands. The group that proposed this is only looking to benefit for themselves. In no way, shape, or form will this make hunting better for the general public. Thanks

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**Tim Schaal**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

takes away hunting on public lands

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**Andy Vandel**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

No comment text provided.

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**James Riis**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

This is the area where I take my grandsons hunting after school & on weekends. It would affect our quality of life if it were closed down. We need fewer refuges rather than more. This goes against the grain of everything related to creating more opportunities & recruitment of young waterfowl hunters, Please reject this!

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**William Schwarz**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I strongly oppose this proposal.  
Please see attachment for a full explanation.  
Thank you.

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**Ben Brown**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I am writing in opposition of the Oahe Dam Waterfowl Refuge Expansion. The GF&P's stated mission is to, optimize hunting access and opportunity, and this proposal definitely would not do that. The proposal would block around 3,000 acres of public land, 50 miles of shoreline and take away opportunities for waterfowlers to hunt. Expanding this refuge would contribute to the number one cause waterfowlers stop hunting, which is lack of access. When the commission looks at this proposal I hope they address the R3 criteria (recruit, reactivate and retain), and realize that the proposal does not meet any of these items. Commissioner's please oppose this proposal.

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**Brett Johnson**

**Rapid City SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Please keep the unique tradition of Pierre's public waters/lands waterfowl hunting open to our public hunters. It has proven itself sustainable in its current management while providing great hunter opportunities for those without private land access. This expanded refuge proposal is nothing short of "self serving" for those who created it. I would like to ask the commission; does this proposal help with solving the three R's ?

Thanks,  
Brett

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**Wayne Lauck**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

My number 1 reason for opposing this proposal is because it will take away waterfowl hunting opportunity and promote commercialization in the area.

It will not bring waterfowl down earlier from North Dakota. Like the Pierre area years ago, irrigation in that area has now provided a new food source and as long as that is available birds will stay there.

Thanks for the opportunity to express my views.

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**Shannon Malone**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

As a resident of Hughes County and one that lives in the area that this is being proposed for. I'm completely opposed to this idea. Hunting shouldn't be for only those that can afford to hunt at commercial locations or with an outfitter. Public land is meant for those of us that love our great state to enjoy the outdoors and enjoy spending time with our families hunting and fishing.

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**Jerry Fromm**

**Sioux Falls SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

This is an attempt by a very small group of people to restrict the use of public lands. Expanding this refuge takes away opportunities for hunters on public land. Therefore it reduces the ability to recruit, reactivate, and retain hunters. I feel like this is a step in the wrong direction.

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**David Jacobson**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Many hunters and especially kids, need places to hunt geese close to town to fit hunting into a busy schedule. They need a reasonable chance for success but can't afford the time or money required by outfitters. Please reject this proposal.

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**Shane Carnahan**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

To whom it may concern, I am not in favor of making a refuge. I am not in favor because there is a refuge already down river called Pierre, SD. Working in wildlife curriculum in other states to coming to Pierre I have worked as Nuisance Wildlife Control Biologist or NWCO. I can see over the years that land use has changed as well as hunting pressure on the Canada goose much like other parts of the nation Canada geese are nuisance in most municipalities. Nuisance golf coarse hunts occur and hazing permits using both lethal and non-lethal force to pursuance the birds to go else where. Yeah, I know saying does not pertain to this issue but it does. Making a refuge as displayed on map provided would just extend the refuge of Pierre which I believe has a protection ordinance for the indigenous and migrating Canada geese. Hunter access is already an issue and with the state of SD seemingly to push the commercializing of hunting, may be this would the case. Seems to political biology because there no science supporting either stance other the visual stance everyday movement of the geese which can biased depending on which party's statement. If this is legislate idea then why not create a study using the resources sdgfp has at hand either contract or staff. Use the science that has been established over the years instead political biology. If anyone would like to discuss further, always welcome to a good discussion.

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**Gordon Scott**

**Fort Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Making a new refuge above Oahe Dam will not bring more waterfowl to the area regardless of what has been put in peoples head. After hunting this river for 30 years, I have seen the goose numbers go down every year. The weather is causing this as we don't have the severe winters we used to have. Also, they find life very good in ND these days. I do not pretend to be a goose whisperer as some claim to know what the geese want. You could make the entire river refuge here and it would make NO difference but take away more opportunity for hunters that GFP claim to support. Making more refuges will be about like the movie "Field of Dreams". It didn't really work there and it won't work here either.

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**Darrell Kennison**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I strongly oppose the expansion of the Lower Oahe Waterfowl refuge. The proposed expansion will do nothing more than promote commercial hunting operations forcing current hunters and potential new hunters to use these operations to pursue the sport they so enjoy and are looking to enjoy.

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**Robert Curtis**

**Redfield SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Added refuges on the Missouri River will not attract or hold more geese. It is a fact that the geese that migrate down the Missouri River only go south as far as they have too according to winter weather conditions. If ND has an open winter the geese stay in ND. If ND freezes up and deep snow cover the geese will migrate farther into SD. That is a fact that can be documented from year to year. If anything the refuges that are not being used by geese on the Missouri River when they migrate here need to be removed for added access

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**Jerry Stephenson**

**Sioux Falls SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

More refuges on Oahe is a good thing. I often hunt geese in the Pierre as our family has a place in the spring creek area. 75 percent of the birds now sit on the refuges. Years like this year the other 25 percent are in or near Corps Bay. Lets keep them there for everyone to hunt. Boat hunters blow birds out areas and ruin hunting for the 90 percent of people that hunt land.

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**James Graff**

**Tea SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I live down by Tea sd. I'm 58 years old, been hunting since i have been 12, have been coming out to Pierre for 45 years hunting and always on land that is open to public including corps land. For years i have seen the landowners and goose camp change refuges and make refuges to benefit themselves, they keep taking and expect us to keep coming out there with less and less places to hunt. I'm getting to the point where i am limited on places where I can hunt and enjoy the outdoors anymore and this would take away another easy access for us elderly people to hunt. I hunted the last weekend out there and seen a lot of people hunting corps bay without spooking the geese off the water. The people who are pushing this and saying that the birds need a place to rest are the same ones that are not letting them rest in fields and eat, because where they sit and rest and get food they are burnt out the next day! Yes I don't like the boats spooking the geese off the water either, make it a waterline refuge and leave the corps land to hunt would work out fine. Eliminate boats from spooking resting waterfowl, I believe there is a law for that. If you don't want the geese spooked then you would have to eliminate all of it from fishing also. The world is messed up enough please don't take more away from us!!

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**Matt Bones**

**Chancellor SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

No comment text provided.

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**Phil Hudson**

**Huron SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

No comment text provided.

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**Pat Malcomb**

**Sioux Falls SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I don't understand the reason behind this proposal the geese showed up at the end of December and are still there today. The only thing the refuge would accomplish is having less goose hunters going to Pierre to spend their money. We need to look into who proposed this and their motives? Would they profit from this proposal and if so should automatically disqualify the proposal. I am all for a water refuge but that would be all I could support the pass shooters have already lost a bunch of land to hunt why drive more people away from the sport.

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**Isaac Full**

**Gettysburg SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

No comment text provided.

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**Brian Grovijahn**

**Sioux Falls SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

No comment text provided.

---

**Christopher Kappenman**

**Tea SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

No comment text provided.

---

**Nik Lipp**

**De Smet SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Another hunting access reduction for the South Dakota resident public hunter, for what - an unfounded illogical attempt to change waterfowl migration patterns.

---

**Paul Lepisto**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Please see the attached comments submitted on behalf of the South Dakota Division of the Izaak Walton League of America.

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**Rex Riis**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

No comment text provided.

---

**David Trefz**

**Webster SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

The expansion of a refuge on the lower Oahe is a move which will decrease the area hunters now have to hunt waterfowl on public lands. We need better and more access for hunting to encourage hunters old and new to participate.

---

**David Ode**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

No comment text provided.

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**Jeffrey Clow**

**Harrisburg SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

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**Roger Hatling**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH? THERE ARE ALREADY 10 REFUGES FROM DODGE DRAW TO THE DAM. THEY ALL SIT RIGHT IN FRONT OF PAST AND PRESENT WATERFOWL LODGES OR CLOSE TO THEM! THE REFUGE EXPANSION OF THIS AREA WILL DO NOTHING TO HELP PUBLIC HUNTING. THE ONLY WAY WE GET GEESE IN THIS AREA IS BY THE CONDITIONS IN NORTH DAKOTA. IF THEY GET SNOW AND COLD LIKE THIS YEAR WE GET GEESE DOWN HERE LIKE THIS YEAR, LAST YEAR NORTH DAKOTA DIDN'T SO WE HAD NO GEESE. THE MIGRATION LIKE WE HAD BACK IN THE 80's and 90's IS GONE. THE LAND PROPOSED IN THE PETITION ONLY HELPS THE PRIVATE LAND OWNERS. THE DUCKS AND GEESE THAT STOP THERE DO GET PUSHED BUT FOR SUME REASON THE COME BACK. THIS LAST FALL PROVED IT! THERE WERE STILL GEESE ALL ALONG THE SHORE AFTER THE SEASON ENDED.

---

**Kit Bramblee**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Show me the scientific data that would support this as a positive action for waterfowl retention in the Pierre area. At this time I don't see this as a scientifically supported action with SDGFP biologist input as an action plan that will work. Fluctuations in waterfowl populations in the Pierre area are not solely based on protected roosting areas. Common sense should show that there are multiple outside factors (weather changes, agricultural production changes, changes in primary waterfowl flyway populations, etc...) that affect the numbers of waterfowl in the Pierre area. By accepting this change it won't give a boost to the waterfowl numbers in the Pierre area, but will hurt hunting opportunities for those that seek out public lands and waters to recreate.

---

**Steven Palmer**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

This proposal restricts the publics hunting access to public land.

---

**Tim Olson**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

No comment text provided.

---

**Leonard Spomer**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I have been waterfowl hunting in the Pierre area for 47 years and oppose the proposed changes to the existing refuge boundaries.

This proposal would remove waterfowl hunting opportunities for the public and do absolutely nothing to bring more geese to the area.

This proposal also goes against the GF&P's 3 R's goals of recruit, reactivate and retain.

Please vote NO on the proposal.

Thank You

Leonard Spomer

Pierre, SD

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**Dan Thayer**

**Aberdeen SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Been hunting SD 56 years and living here for 68. Number one problem I've seen over this time is the continual chipping away of access for the public. This "refuge" proposal takes out 3000 acres and 50 miles of shoreline and how many more hunters hang up their shotguns? Also the proposal does nothing to hold and attract birds as migration patterns have changed. Looks like a flacid proposal to try to make some commerical fat cats happy. Please don't approve this!

---

**Thomas Wickenhauser**

**Onida SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

I support anything that will potential keep more geese in the Pierre area and for longer. I think the refuge proposal will do that. If some are worried about taking land away from pass shooters just make the refuges water refuges only. Ask any hunter that hunts the Pierre area where most the birds fly out from and everyone will say without hesitation the refuges. Folks opposed to this proposal will tell refuges don't work and that is flat out wrong. Ask those opposed why on most years 90 percent of the waterfowl sit inside refuge boundaries. Existing refuges on the Missouri will have birds in them within 100 yards of the boundary but not a single bird would dare to sit outside that refuge. Boat hunters do a great job pushing birds out of non refuge areas. Let give these new refuges a chance to see if birds will use them and provide additional birds in the area. Please pass the refuge proposal.

---

**John Schuldt**

**Heber Springs AR**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Any loss of public hunting is detrimental to the continuation of the average hunter being able to support the mission of conservation. Fewer hunters will be the result; if this measure is approved.

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**Ryley Curtis**

**Redfield SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

There is no reason for this increase in Missouri River Refuge. It will in no way affect the migration of geese from ND and will take away hunting opportunities

---

**James Zeck**

**Sioux Falls SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I am writing in opposition of the expansion of the Missouri River Pierre Waterfowl Refuge. As a non-landowner and as a hunt safe instructor I am keenly aware of one of the main obstacles to hunter recruitment and retention. That being access to "GOOD" and "PRODUCTIVE" public lands. It has been increasingly difficult to get access to productive private hunting lands without having deep pockets. By increasing the size of the Missouri River Waterfowl Refuge you will be decreasing a productive piece of public lands that many of us have had the privilege to hunt in the past and I hope many will also have access to in the future.

Please join me in this opposition to decreasing access to productive public hunting opportunities.

---

**John Pickrel**

**Clark SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Stop this!! Only helps land owners around the proposed new refuge and stops the public from having access!

---

**Charles Rokusek**

**Sioux Falls SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

This is from the 29 - 90 Sportsman's Club

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**Rick Solberg**

**Baltic SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I can't afford to pay to hunt geese, by closing this area and stopping hunters from public land is wrong

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**Roger Novotny**

**Fort Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I previously voiced my opposition, however I want to make sure that it is heard as loud as the proponents of the refuge scheme.

I have waterfowl hunted for 60 years in South Dakota, both on land and on water. The hunting on the water is absolutely one of the most challenging and difficult hunts available, so I have seen it all. I have been harassed by top of bluff landowners, cussed at and shot at for hunting "their" geese or ducks, even though I was completely legal. I view this bogus new refuge as an attempt by pay to hunt landowners to deny "public" hunters access. First, there is no evidence that it would make one ounce of difference in the migration patterns of the waterfowl. Their patterns are dictated by food, open water and weather, which is exactly what they find in ND most years. It would NOT enhance the numbers in the areas proposed. It also seems very contrary to the very mission of GFP and the Commission, which is to recruit, reactivate and retain waterfowl hunters. Gaining access to any private land in the Fort Pierre and Pierre areas is virtually impossible, unless you want to pay. I am completely stumped why the Commission and GFP would even consider such a proposal to hamper those that hunt with fair chase to those that charge to charge to sit in a pit. It is baffling and somewhat worrisome.

---

**Tom McCormick**

**Trussville AL**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Closing shore line is a bad idea.  
The rest is leased or no hunting area.

---

**Gary Gibson**

**Garretson SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

No comment text provided.

---

**Corey Goodall**

**Tea SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Reducing opportunities for hunters while creating profit opportunities for guides & farmers isn't really a great plan for the GFP, although who knows in this state.  
Just got a waterfowl license for the first time last year, but if my opportunities are going to be limited, why would I ever spend another dime on it?

---

**Ian Williams**

**Whitewood SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I don't approve with the petition on the waterfowl Refuge because we don't have the geese migration as we used to

---

**George Bogenschutz**

**Nunda SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Lack of Public access is the single greatest cause of declining waterfowl hunter numbers. This proposal will take current access to 3000 acres away from us. Please oppose this proposal.  
Thank you , George Bogenschutz

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**Richard Barnett**

**Sioux Falls SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

NO NO NO on this modification. It is entirely negative to the public trust responsibility you have to allow and provide for reasonable access to public-land waterfowl hunters

---

**Shawn Deuel**

**Spearfish SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Hunting access to public land when removed is NEVER reclaimed for purpose of hunting. More refuge is not the answer, opening more public hunting land and better farming practice is the answer. When government or agency takes something that was never truly theirs you can be sure it will never be returned to public or if it does, it will be at a cost.

---

**Andrew Nelson**

**Hays KS**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Quit making changes to appease people that are profiting from hunting. It's the same thing that happened with NR waterfowl licenses. Think about what's best for the resource as a whole and the residents of SD. More refuge doesn't mean more birds. Taking away hunting opportunities from people that can't afford to lease ground and rely on public access isn't the answer. If the existing refuge isn't holding birds making it bigger won't help. You can't hold birds that never get there in the first place.

---

**William Koupal**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I am opposed to the creation of an additional refuge on the Missouri River. The proposed refuge would strip away hunting opportunities from waterfowlers young and old, experienced and new, from Pierre and across the state. Proponents have offered no evidence that denying opportunity to hunters who carry decoys to the water and hunt from shore, hunt from boats or pass-shoot the ridges would increase opportunities on other public water or land. They have offered no evidence to show that any of these forms of hunting prompt birds to fly further south. I urge the Commission to vote no.

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**Joseph Cannia**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Do not shorten public hunting opportunities

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**Tom Dravland**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

As a waterfowl hunter in the Pierre area I am opposed to increasing the waterfowl refuge from current boundaries.

As I listened to the testimony of the proponents and commission members it seemed the main reason to increase the current refuge was to increase goose population. Goose numbers are not decreasing, they are increasing. Bag limits for dark geese have increased to four per day, yet this proposal wants to restrict further hunting opportunity and goose harvest.

The Department said it best in their testimony when they indicated the goose numbers in the Pierre area are dictated by weather, freeze up north of Pierre and availability of food, NOT by increasing the size of refuge.

This proposal will have a chilling effect on recruitment and retention of numbers of hunters, which is already in decline.

Please oppose this proposal to increase the current waterfowl refuge in the Pierre area.

---

**George Vandell**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

This action will close public land, public water and hunting of a public waterfowl resource. Only those who have access to private land could potentially (?) benefit. The refuge expansion will not draw birds from ND or Canada. It will only prohibit hunters from hunting ducks and geese in areas we have been successfully hunting since the dams were built.

---

**Camden Espeland**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I first started goose hunting in Pierre, the proposal of the refuge expansion will take away many pass shooting opportunities that the public has. Doing this not only hurts the hunters who cannot afford to hunt over decoys but also kids that are trying to work their way into waterfowl hunting. Funny how many of the committee who is proposing this are guides themselves. "Take away the publics opportunity they will have to come hunt with us" (pay to hunt). This idea is more about money than it is about waterfowl hunting. Taking away the publics opportunity to hunt Public land and force them to hunt private or pay to hunt is going to hurt the states economy when it comes to out of state residents trying to hunt public land and also others from around the state who travel to Pierre for the great hunting opportunities it has. I strongly encourage you to oppose this.

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**Spencer Flory**

**Black Hawk SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

No comment text provided.

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**David Coley**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I oppose expanding waterfowl refuges in the Pierre area. This proposal only decreases hunting access and opportunities by eliminating waterfowl hunting on lands that are literally game production areas.

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**Shelby Docken**

**Beresford SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I do not support the supposed waterfowl refuge expansion on the Missouri River before Pierre. The loss of numbers on the River is not because of lack refuge. The climate has changed with less snow cover in North Dakota and more food along the River up there. The birds will move down only if they cannot find open water and food. I have hunted in North Dakota and they manage the shooting hours that puts less pressure on the birds and results the birds are not pushed south to the Pierre area. Additional refuge area is not going to result in higher numbers. The birds are still up north! This is not a solution to a problem that the GF&P has no control over. Do NOT approve this agenda item.

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**Richard Visker**

**Sioux Falls SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Please oppose this bill. This does nothing to help keep/attract more geese, all it does is take away opportunities for hunters and give more opportunities to landowners and guides. If the GFP did some actual research on this, they would know this bill is not for the greater good.

---

**Derek Schiefelbein**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Dear GFP Commission,

Hello- First I want to thank you for your work on the commission. The work on modifying the eligibility for participation in the youth waterfowl season for those who have not reached the age 18 is great and getting and keeping young hunters interest. The mission of 3 "R" is needed!

My name is Derek Schiefelbein I have been hunting and following waterfowl trends for 30 years in the fields, lakebeds, and the waters of the Missouri River from Mobridge to Vermillion in South Dakota and everywhere in between. I have lived in Pierre, Vermillion, and Brookings SD. But currently live in Pierre . I have spent nearly a 1,000 days hunting with my father and children in the very area that this proposal will take away. I have introduced friends and other young hunters to hunting waterfowl in this area as the pictures show. Please don't eliminate public waters and lands from the common sportsman!

Please SAY NO to the proposed Refuge Expansion on Lake Oahe and Sharpe. Bottom line... This proposed refuge expansion would eliminate the most popular waterfowl water hunting access in the Pierre area from Spring Creek on Lake Oahe to about Antelope Creek on Lake Sharpe. It would make a refugee 30 miles long! Much of this area is in refuge currently.

Compressed history of existing waterfowl refuges from Mail Shack Creek on a Oahe reservoir downstream to Antelope Creek of Lake Sharpe:

The existing waterfowl refuges from Mail Shack Creek on Lake Oahe downstream to Antelope Creek on Lake Sharpe are a product of a GFP working group formed at the request of State Senator Mike Rounds and Governor Bill Janklow in 2002. The work group was composed of hunters, land owners, wildlife officials, biologist, hunting guides and commercial interests involved in goose and duck hunting in the Pierre, Fort Pierre and Onida areas. The goal of the work group was to significantly reduce the conflict between commercial hunting interests, bluff/pass shooters interest, boat and water hunting interest, and enhanced waterfowl hunting opportunities by a zoning approach to reduce conflict.

The establishment of the current waterline and take line refuges in the areas of Oahe and Lake Sharpe also played a critical part in also establishing the Lower Oahe Waterfowl Access Area east of Okoboji Creek, cow Creek and spring Creek. This area is comprised of approximately 32 square miles of private lands leased by GFP to provide past shooting pits, field shooting with decoys, walking areas, and pheasant hunting. The Lower Oahe Waterfowl Access Area area is prominently featured in the GFP annual Hunting Atlas and area is used by hundreds of sportsmen every fall in hunting seasons. In summary the currently established waterfowl refuges from Mail Shack Creek downstream to the southeast point of La Fromboise island on lake Sharpe are in integral part of the agreements reached by the working group and followed up by a series of discussions with the GFP Commission, Senator Rounds and Governor Janklow in 2003 through 2004. It was served its purpose well and has been widely accepted by hunters, land owners and other users who use these public waters and lands to recreate. If the Commission chooses to enact this new proposal it will take away the balance of the unwritten agreement that has now been affect for 18 years and restricts waterfowl hunting on public waters and lands that currently provide that opportunity.

The Lower Oahe Waterfowl Access Area and other private lands leased by GFP are great! But those lease contracts end leaving sportsman without. This happened in 2021 with the lose of 4000 + cropland acres of prime goose hunting land just south of the West Shore boat ramps towards Twin Bays in Stanley county. Many folks hunted this Walk-in-area, but when the landowner doesn't renew the contract it's lost. More opportunity lost.

Midwinter bird count scientific data.

The midwinter bird counts have been conducted since the 1950's in all 50 states on the same day around the 1st week of January to capture migratory bird numbers for bird management. They count eagles, geese, ducks ect.

In North Dakota prior to 1998 it was rare to count more than 10,000 Canada geese in January during the midwinter count!

From 1998 to 2004 goose numbers ranged between 2,000 and 89,000 geese.

January 2005 set a record above 89,000 geese

January 2006 set another record above 2005

January 2007 set another record above 2006

January 2008 175,000 geese!

January 2009 9,700 geese Hard winter in ND with major snowpack.

January 2010 25,400 geese

January 2011 7,300 geese Extreme winter in ND with major snowpack. Year of the Missouri river flood if you recall.

January 2012 190,000 geese and 88,000 ducks (all-time record)  
January 2013 127,000 geese and 32,000 ducks  
January 2014 52,700 geese and 19,000 ducks  
January 2015 118,000 geese and 27,000 ducks  
January 2016 110,000 geese and 15,400 ducks  
January 2017 26,300 geese Tons of snow in North Dakota and central South Dakota.  
January 2018 134,000 geese and 16,000 ducks  
January 2019 99,000 geese and 5,300 ducks  
January 2020 90,000 geese and 4,000 ducks  
January 2021 165,000 geese and 35,000 ducks  
January 2022 81,000 geese  
Last ten year average is 119,000 geese wintering in North Dakota!!

Source: Mike Szymanski – ND Waterfowl biologist (701-328-6360) Mike stated “In the future Pierre SD would maybe see solid numbers of geese 3/10 years.” I couldn’t agree more!  
Here are a couple of trend charts for ND and SD. Canada geese are in black and mallards green, with trendlines. As you can see the black trend line (Canada geese) for North Dakota is increasing and South Dakota is decreasing over the past 22 years.

Source: Rocco Murano | Senior Waterfowl Biologist South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks  
These number and graphs illustrate that a new waterfowl refuge will not change to migration and movement of large race Canada geese.  
CORN!  
The presents of CORN in North Dakota and far north into Canada might be the number one reason goose hunting has changed in central South Dakota. But there are some other reasons if you continue to read.

With all the CORN in North Dakota and the need for 12” of snow to cover this corn in addition with extreme cold temperatures to freeze most of the water. The Garrison dam tailrace in ND has been keeping water unfroze for 8-10 miles ever since the dam was built in the 1950’s but the corn wasn’t there until the mid 1990’s. This is the data and the trends showing why Pierre SD is the 2nd or 3rd choice for Canada geese wintering along the Missouri river today, even though South Dakota currently has 21 waterfowl refuges on the Missouri river!  
South Dakota and it’s 21 Missouri river waterfowl refuges are losing the goose number game horribly to North Dakota based on the data above and North Dakota only has one goose refuge!!!  
Yes you heard that right.....  
North Dakota only has one goose refuge on the entire Missouri river. It’s located below the Garrison dam tailrace downstream to Washburn North Dakota on Lake Oahe. North Dakota has the bulk of the birds we want year after year.  
Waterfowl refuges don’t make birds migrate. One more waterfowl refuge in South Dakota won’t change all the above data.

One more point of discussion. The claim the “Missouri river has hundreds of miles of opportunity to hunt on the water ” is not true. Here is why. Many of those miles are NOT open for hunting. All of Lake Oahe bordering the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe is closed to public hunting. The same is true with the bordering waters on Lake Sharpe and the reservations there. Honestly it’s like pheasant hunting if you have 2,000 acres of land to hunt only 200 acres are good hunting. Only the areas of good cover (creek bottoms, cattail dams, trees, and food sources) offer quality hunting opportunity the rest is just, well - land to walk on and look at the blue sky. Another way to say this is 90% of the game/fish/fowl inhabit only 10% of the land or water. The hunting reality is that flocks of geese and ducks only use a few of the bays on Lake Oahe outside of the existing refuge system and their use is dependent on migration, weather patterns and access to high energy food. Every year is different and requires hours of scouting just for one successful hunt.

The geese final came to Pierre SD this year 2021/2022 with the perfect storm (12+ inches of snow and 10 days of -10 to -25 degrees) in North Dakota.  
The January 4th 2022 midwinter count showed SD had 72,000 geese in the Pierre area and ND 81,000 geese. ND still beat us! We just can’t win anymore??. But the geese that came used some of the current South Dakota refuges and all hunters were very successful.  
There is no need for more waterfowl refuges. This were we hunt as a family. Please oppose!  
Thank you  
Brad Schiefelbein 70 years  
Derek Schiefelbein 42

Carter Schiefelbein 13  
Quinn Schiefelbein 11  
Bronson Schiefelbein 9  
29504 Marble Rd  
Pierre SD 57501

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**Jacob Hartwig**

**Watertown SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I oppose this because it will take away public land that I use for waterfowl hunting with my kids and my family. I feel this refuge will only hurt the sport of waterfowl hunting, and I don't see any benefits for the public. I don't think it will positively effect the geese in the area, and it will only further monopolize hunting in the area! The only people who benefit from this are the land owners who want to charge hunters to access their land around the reduce area. It will eliminate the opportunity for hunters wanting to access public land to hunt without having to pay!

## Other

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**Gregg Baily**

**Crofton NE**

**Position:** other

**Comment:**

Our family is a SD Century Farm owners but I unfortunately live out of state. Having passed a deer non resident land owners permit we would like the commission to consider a similar permit for land owner only pheasant permits. The concern is the 10 day limitation not the cost. Most hunts are only 1 day hunts and weeks apart, so many hunts are missed. Thank you Gregg "Badger" Baily

**Jason Stoeser**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I was informed that there was a couple commissioners that voted against, extending the grouse and prairie chicken season. Whoever they were, you obviously don't understand how many grouse and chickens there are out there. I don't want to here the BS about pushing them out of there habitat or gonna distrust how they are gonna make it through the winter. There are thousands of them out there and its very hard to kill them during the later months. They are all bunched up in big groups, very healthy by the way. They still feed in SF fields and corn fields and roost in the grass, everywhere! One gets up they all get up and you usually have to shoot as they fly by or over. Not extending the season to the end of January like you did the pheasant season is the dumbest idea you have come up with. Get your head out of the sand and think about it.

---

**Steven Kraai**

**West Olive MI**

**Position:** other

**Comment:**

Just want to say thank you for the South Dakota Public Whitetail Hunting. My 2 son(s) and I have hunted the Newton Hills State Park for the past 5 years. This has been some of the best whitetail hunting I have ever experienced. The quality and quantity has been unbelievable and I know this come from proper game management. I just wanted to say thank you for all your hard work.

---

**Mary Arlington, Exec Dir Sdcoa**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Please see the attached letter regarding expansion of campsites.

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**Mary Willging**

**Sioux Falls SD**

**Position:** other

**Comment:**

When is all the plastic bags around Sioux Falls Game Fish and Parks going to be cleaned up, it looks terrible.

---

**Leslie Hladysz**

**Keystone SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I am 100% opposed to any further development in Custer State Park.

PLEASE stop.

I hike there daily.

It's already overrun YEAR ROUND.

We can only take so much.

Please dont build another campground.

Please think about the environmental impact, the wildlife we are losing and the local residents who have just had enough tourism!

The word is out about the Black Hills and it's too much!

This area you are considering to develop is the most wild and pristine in the park.

Please let it remain that way.

---

**Deonne Tusha**

**Deadwood SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Please reconsider the development in Custer State Park to accommodate MORE camping spaces along the wildlife loop in the park!

The southern and northern hills are overdeveloped already! That is evident with the amount of displaced wildlife :-(

Do NOT support "paving paradise and putting up more parking lots!!!

---

**Steve Hodapp**

**Omaha NE**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I oppose Gov. Noem's proposal to build another campground along the wildlife loop in Custer State Park. I have visited CSP and the Hills several times a year for decades. The Hills have become over-developed. I'd hate to see more development in CSP take away more natural area, have a negative on local wildlife, and increase the load on local resources through more waste. If more campsites are felt necessary in the region then use the proposed \$10m for another CSP campground to support plans of other regional private operators to meet demand.

---

**David Johnston**

**Rapid City SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I am opposed to the State of South Dakota adding more RV camping sights in Custer State Park. It would increase heavy traffic on the roads within the park and would compete directly with private businesses around the park. If the state feels expansion of RV camping is needed in the Black Hills, offer low interest loans to existing businesses or new ones wishing to open.

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**Nancy Hamak**

**Keystone SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Opposition to proposed Custer State Park Commission.

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**Gail Gabriel**

**Rapid City SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

Hello! My name is Gail Gabriel. Myself and my family are avid hikers and nature lovers. My 9 year old is a junior naturalist, and would love to be involved in natural/environmental science when she is older. We are interested in seeing Game Fish and Parks push for wildlife over/underpasses in the Black Hills and surrounding areas. This would be a great way to help our wildlife, and drivers on busy highways. If there are any programs currently doing this please send me the information. Thank you for your time!

---

**Steven Frooman**

**Rapid City SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I oppose the proposal to build a campground on Wildlife Loop Road in Custer State Park. Construction of that campground may create more opportunity for some people to stay overnight in the park, but it will do so only by diminishing the reason people have to visit the park in the first place. That's on top of it being a case of the state competing with lodging businesses, which is inappropriate.

---

**Robin Lucero**

**Lead SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I am opposed to the proposed new campground in Custer State Park off of Wildlife Loop Road. Wildlife Loop is named that for a reason and the consequences of a new 175 spot campground would be detrimental to the wildlife, the land and the serenity of the park itself.

---

**Marianne Fisher**

**Sioux Falls SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Dear Board Members, I'm writing to beg you not to approve the massive campground the Governor has proposed for Custer State Park right in Barnes Canyon. The whole point of the Wildlife Loop Trail is that it is a loop where you get to see an abundance of wildlife. If this campground is built - 175 campsites!!!! - that will drive the wildlife away, and that will break all our hearts, not to mention ruin many tourist's vacations. People come to see the wildlife, and then leave them in their (relatively) pristine environment. They can camp at the other campgrounds, or outside the park. Please, let Bryan Canyon alone!

---

**Carolyn Helm**

**Rapid City SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Please DO NOT have a new campground put in at Custer State Park. We must preserve the area for the wildlife, scenery etc. as it is and for future generations. Not for the financial gains of a few. There are other options for people to stay in the area. Thank you

---

**Justin Mettler**

**Sioux Falls SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Just curious the thought process on why we lowering the bag limit on turkeys in the Black Hills from 2 to 1 for resident hunters? I understand 100% that the turkey numbers in the Black Hills are declining, but why are we allowing unlimited licenses to be sold for all resident and non-resident? With lowering the resident bag limit you are saying that residents that harvest 2 turkeys per year is the reason that the turkey numbers are declining?

---

**Mike Eilers**

**Brookings SD**

**Position:** other

**Comment:**

I am opposed to coyote control by air. I think the money spent on helicopter rental, paying a pilot, a gunner and a spotter is a huge waste of money that could be put to better use elsewhere. Coyotes are left on the ground, so there is no way of knowing for certain how many coyotes are taken in a day. I would like to know the justification for this type of predator control when there are other less expensive ways to deal with this problem.

---

**Mark Kloos**

**Gary SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

I had a crossbow-lock permit and it expires the 08/1/2022 I need to renew it.

---

**Jordan Schneider**

**Rapid City SD**

**Position:** other

**Comment:**

Dear South Dakota Game and Fish,

As an avid turkey hunter I feel it as my responsibility to make this comment from a hunters perspective. I have been turkey hunting in the black hills now for many years and feel like the decision to allow each and every nonresident that applies for a black hills turkey tag To be given an over the counter turkey tag is an absolutely terrible decision. I believe that it should be a limited draw with a certain amount of tags allocated to the nonresident pool. I have found that the amount of nonresident trucks driving around the hills during turkey season has become astronomical and quite frankly I see probably 2-3 times the amount of nonresident license plates Driving the hills during turkey season. It has gotten soo bad trying to hunt my favorite spots because the nonresidents are flooding the woods in numbers that I have never seen before. Not to mention that I can no longer draw a double tag thanks to nonresidents taking way too many turkeys and I can no longer hunt fall turkey in the areas that I used to, and now I can no longer hunt a season solely allocated to resident only. Please make this a limited draw to the nonresidents so us residents can enjoy a better hunting experience. Thank you for your consideration

---

**Patrick Gross**

**Vermillion SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Totally opposed to the expansion of the wildlife refuge near Pierre for waterfowl. One of the reasons we are losing hunters, including youth hunters, is a lack of access. Joe Sixpack will not spend money at commercial hunting operations to take his kids hunting. Losing thousands of acres of public hunting is and should be opposed by the Commission, who's purpose is to serve the public, not commercial operators. It's time to kick the commercial hunting efforts in this state into neutral for awhile. If this passes it will be yet another reason to avoid the Pierre area for hunting.

## Public Waters

---

**Jean Liudahl**

**Grenville SD**

**Position:** other

**Comment:**

I went to the agenda for the January meeting and see there is a proposal on Public Waters. I can't find anywhere on the website to access what it says in that proposal nor any or the other proposals!!! How can I comment if I don't know what the proposal is??? Very Frustrating!!

---

**Daryl Englund**

**Btookings SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

I support SDGFP and USFW proposal to allow non motorized boats, canoes kayaks in the Waubay refuge.

Daryl Englund

---

**Patrick Sundermann**

**Parker SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Why do people need a park sticker to use the public boat ramp? Claiming it has cost \$500,000 is legitimate but isn't this why we pay for the habit stamp? Stuff like this is why we were told we were going to pay for the habitat stamp. What did you do with the habitat stamp money if you can't use it for parking, ramps and public lake access?

---

**Steven Palmer**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

This will expand public access to the lake. I support.

## Elk tag numbers increase

Why is the Commission making a proposal to increase tag numbers? This should be done by the game biologists, who are the ones who can determine the carrying capacity of each unit/BHNF? It appears to me that the commission is pushing to do this from pressure of the public, not because of science! Does this proposal align with the Elk Plan developed a few years back? Aren't adjustments supposed to be made only, after the Elk Plan reaches maturity? The G,F,&P Commission should not be trying to change the carrying capacity of the units/seasons! They are not the people who know a thing about carrying capacity! The Big Game Biologists are the ones who should making determinations on how many elk the Black Hills Rifle/Praire/Archery/CSP can sustain. THERE SHOULD NOT BE A PROPOSAL TO INCREASE ANY TAGS WHATSOEVER, BEFORE THE BIOLOGISTS KNOW WHAT THE POPULATION IS! The quality of the elk hunt will be terrible with all the extra people hunting during the seasons! Think about that! The more people you have out there, the more the elk will be on the run! They will be chased across state lines, onto private lands, where no-one will be able to go hunt, they will be running around with their tongues hanging out! To me that is not a quality hunt! This is not science based, just plain old money for the State, guaranteed! Thus, I oppose the increase of tag numbers as it is not science based at the time of the proposal! Those on that commission have no business trying to propose this change!

Kelly Koistinen

Spearfish, SD

January 7, 2022

Proposed Oahe Dam State Waterfowl Refuge Expansion  
Position Comment

Dear South Dakota Game Fish and Park Commission Members,

I OPPOSE the proposed Oahe Dam State Waterfowl Refuge Expansion which would modify the boundary of the Oahe Dam State Waterfowl Refuge by expanding the geographic area of the refuge to include the water of Lake Oahe and all lands owned and managed by the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks and the US Army Corps of Engineers lying south and west of S.D. Highway 1804 and north and east of S.D. Highway 1806 from the current refuge boundary upstream of Oahe Dam to the east boundary of Peoria Flats State Waterfowl Refuge and the water line from the downstream point of LaFramboise Island to the downstream point of Farm Island.

My opposition to the expansion of the waterfowl refuge would eliminate opportunities for waterfowl hunting that can be accessed by land or water and by foot or by boat. The proposal does not expand on the benefit for such action. There has been no study why this area is being considered to be a refuge from waterfowl hunting.

South Dakota is rich in hunting tradition, particularly waterfowl hunting. We have seen a decline in waterfowl hunting in the past 20 years in all parts of the United States. With this proposal it is wanting to eliminate hunting opportunity on public land and water in an area that already has multiple state waterfowl refuges. I don't think this is an opportunity to expand waterfowl hunting it's a proposal to take away public lands and water for opportunity to waterfowl hunt.

I have been waterfowl hunting my entire life and will continue until I can't go anymore. I love to take people waterfowl hunting whether they are new at waterfowl hunting or old hat or even the worse callers. I enjoy taking my children waterfowl hunting in particularly on the river portion of the proposal. The access is easy, the hunts are fun, the location is convenient and the memories of that will always be in theirs, I want that memory to become their children's reality someday in those same areas.

Again I OPPOSE the proposed Oahe Dam State Waterfowl Refuge Expansion.

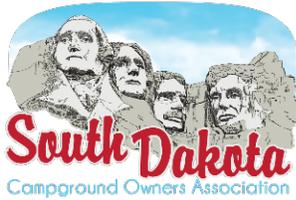
Sincerely,

Ryan G. Cumbow

20488 Browning Road

Pierre, SD 57501

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ryan G. Cumbow", written in a cursive style.



## South Dakota Campground Owners Association (SDCOA)

[www.SouthDakotaCampgroundOwnersAssociation.org](http://www.SouthDakotaCampgroundOwnersAssociation.org)

[www.CampInSouthDakota.com](http://www.CampInSouthDakota.com)

[info@CampInSouthDakota.com](mailto:info@CampInSouthDakota.com)

(605) 593-1557

PO Box 824, Pierre SD 57501

Executive Director, Mary Arlington

January 7, 2022

The Hon. Kristi Noem, Governor, State of South Dakota

SD Game, Fish & Parks Commission

SD Department of Game, Fish & Parks

### **In the Matter of the Significant Expansion of Campgrounds in Custer State Park**

The Governor recently proposed the addition of 175 RV campsites in Custer State Park. This makes perfect sense on the surface. There is certainly a demand for low-cost, high value campsites anywhere. The private sector has expanded greatly over the decades since campsites were built in the park. The camping market is especially hot right now, with over 500,000 new RVs sold annually and with camping perceived to be a safer way to travel in the COVID environment. I commend the Department for bringing this opportunity to the Governor's attention.

It seems ironic, however, that the biggest intrusion of state enterprise into competition with the private sector would come during the term of a Governor who is famous for drawing a hard line between free enterprise and socialism. She has also repeatedly stated the government needs "to get out of the way" of small businesses (e.g., [video from September 30, 2021](#)). Make no mistake, the guests to be accommodated in these new sites would otherwise stay in a private park, paying sales taxes and supporting the real estate tax of the entrepreneur.

This has come up before. During the Mickelson administration, GF&P's attempt to compete with private campgrounds by enhancing the campground at Custer State Park resulted in a bill passed by both houses that *limited* GF&P's ability to do so. Governor Mickelson vetoed the bill, saying that he heard the concerns of the private campgrounds so the bill would not be necessary. GF&P pulled their proposal.

As they've done in the past, private operators are even now expanding to meet the current demand. Would they make those investments if the state also added campsites that would be available for less than the private market? While there are rational reasons why this expansion would be beneficial to the state, and even to camping guests, it *strongly* conflicts with an open atmosphere in South Dakota for the growth of private enterprise without the cloud of interference from the State.

It is a given that campsites in Custer State Park were in place before there were any private campgrounds. Because the State didn't move to 'own' the whole camping market, there was an opening for entrepreneurs to step in. Now there are people whose livelihoods and financial resources depend on the fair competition that comes from private owners competing with each other. Does anybody reading this letter believe that the State doesn't have competitive advantages over private campgrounds?

There is no argument that in this red-hot camping market, private campgrounds would barely feel the additional sites during the peak season. When this hot market is over, or during the shoulder seasons, these 175 sites would then be occupied at the expense of existing businesses.

There are many other questions about this project that might be asked:

Why is the cost of developing these sites double what it costs the private sector to do the same work?

Do the citizens of South Dakota really want more infrastructure in the park that will primarily benefit out of state guests? (More water usage, more roads, more sewage to deal with, more electricity.)

How does it make sense to use General Fund dollars (coming from tax collections such as those collected at private parks) to compete with and possibly undermine those very businesses?

Many South Dakotans love our Crown Jewel the way it is. They don't want more public accommodation intrusion. Is the state ready to answer this concern, especially at the expense of hard-working private operators?

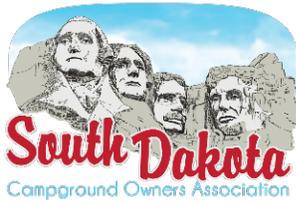
Thank you for your thoughtful and careful consideration of this issue. The South Dakota Campground Owners Association's position paper on unfair government competition is attached. Help us in our mission to accommodate camping guests of South Dakota with a high-quality experience without interference from our own state government.

Sincerely,

The South Dakota Campground Owners Association



Mary Arlington, Executive Director



## South Dakota Campground Owners Association (SDCOA)

[www.SouthDakotaCampgroundOwnersAssociation.org](http://www.SouthDakotaCampgroundOwnersAssociation.org)

[www.CampInSouthDakota.com](http://www.CampInSouthDakota.com)

[info@CampInSouthDakota.com](mailto:info@CampInSouthDakota.com)

(605) 593-1557

PO Box 824, Pierre SD 57501

Executive Director, Mary Arlington

### POSITION STATEMENT

#### DEVELOPMENT AND/OR EXPANSION OF PUBLIC CAMPGROUNDS

January 2022

In this matter, especially as it relates to Custer State Park, the South Dakota Campground Owners Association hereby adopts the position which has been adopted by the National Association of RV Parks & Campgrounds (ARVC), last amended on March 27, 2019. The text is shown in its entirety here; we used red font for a paragraph of utmost attention.

ARVC supports convenient and open access of appropriate areas on public lands for motorized and nonmotorized recreation. ARVC supports using public lands to meet the needs of a diverse recreating public, while working jointly with public and private interests to assure that the environmental concerns remain of paramount importance.

ARVC considers the existing public lands to be national treasures which should remain in the public domain and which should be available for the enjoyment of all Americans and international visitors. ARVC strongly advocates maintaining quality visitor services at these locations, even during government shutdowns, while preserving and protecting the natural state of our most treasured resources.

Currently, there are approximately 77 million active camper households<sup>1</sup> among the American population which represents a wide diversity of camping experiences. ARVC believes that rustic camping experiences are appropriate to be provided by the public sector. ARVC considers rustic campgrounds to be those identified as "Semi-Developed Campgrounds" in the NFPA 1194 Standard for RV Parks & Campgrounds. That standard defines Semi-Developed Campgrounds as "A campground with two or more recreational vehicle or recreational park trailer unit sites, accessible by vehicular traffic. Roads, facilities (toilets and/or privies) are provided..."

ARVC opposes the use of public funds or private investments for the construction, upgrading and/or operation of RV parks and campgrounds by federal, state or local government entities or private concessionaires, if those public funds or private investments are used to create facilities containing amenities of the type typically found in developed RV parks and campgrounds as described in the current NFPA standard, 1194, and when those facilities can be provided by existing private sector RV parks and campgrounds in the nearby area, regardless of whether they are to be concessioned to a commercial operator or operated by government.

<sup>1</sup> 2018 North American Camping Report

National ARVC opposes government operation of any commercial enterprise that would be in direct competition with private enterprise. We see no valid reason for government at any level to engage in activities that are non-governmental. We do not believe that government entities should ever compete with taxpaying businesses.

New facility development, expansion and upgrades which would create facilities containing amenities of the type typically found in developed RV parks and campgrounds as described in NFPA standard 1194, are inappropriate on public lands, whether by a public agency or concessionaire, if the existing private sector in the nearby area is capable of adequately meeting the market demand.

ARVC advocates the continued development and expansion of new public sector recreation facilities that are unique to the public domain and that are not inherently commercial services. Further, ARVC supports upgrading and protecting existing recreational facilities to assure that they remain available to the public and are adequate for intended recreation purposes. Examples of public facilities appropriate for government involvement are hiking trails, public fishing areas, trail heads, wildlife propagation, wilderness and primitive camping areas, scenic vistas and viewing areas, and archeological, historic and cultural sites.

ARVC supports the adoption and implementation of entrance and recreation fees that permit government to recover much of the cost of operating recreation areas for public use and provides for the retention of fees at the location where they are raised. The fees shall be used first to reduce the backlog of maintenance currently existing on federal lands, and then for the regular maintenance and operating needs of public land recreation facilities. Further, fees should be established to reflect the true cost of operating campground facilities.

Before authorizing the construction or upgrading of any new campgrounds operating on public lands beyond a semi-developed state, an economic impact study, an environmental impact study and a market analysis should be undertaken, published and distributed to all interested parties to ensure existing private sector operations are not damaged. Public hearings should be held and Public comments solicited with sufficient time for public input.

Campgrounds operating on public lands by a public agency or concession operator shall comply with all laws, standards and regulations governing the operation of commercial campgrounds on private lands including standard federal and state wage guidelines.

Public campgrounds shall be governed by the same highway signage rules and access that govern commercial facilities.

ARVC supports the Federal government providing consolidated, valid and up-to-date information about recreation opportunities and facilities available to the public on all Federal lands in a single location or website, as long as this information is not provided in a manner that has an unfairly competitive impact on private sector businesses. ARVC believes that the Federal government should not provide public land recreation information in an interactive system that would allow the public to make reservations directly or through electronic "links," but instead the Federal government should solely rely on the private sector (and on state and local tourism agencies) to provide interactive

information systems and for the commercial marketing of all Federal land recreation information and provide an opportunity for private sector participation to integrate Federal facility marketing with private sector marketing that allows private sectors to advertise / buy a listing on that system.

ARVC supports the awarding of concessions, permits and contracts to the private sector for the commercial development and operation of recreation areas that provide services to the public that are inherently commercial in nature and which would support a private sector operation, if those services cannot be provided by existing private sector businesses in the nearby area. Public sector charges for services shall be based on prevailing rates for comparable amenities and services available in similar facilities within the same geographical area.

Notwithstanding previously stated competition, ARVC supports the establishment of a level playing field between public land concession operators and nearby private sector, commercial enterprises. Further, ARVC supports the posting of concession opportunities in a manner that permits local and small business interests to access the information on opportunities in their areas.

ARVC Approved: May 2, 1997  
ARVC Amended: November 18, 2002  
ARVC Amended: April 17, 2003  
ARVC Amended: April 4, 2009  
ARVC Amended: March 27, 2019

This SDCOA Position was adopted by the SDCOA Board of Directors, per recommendation by the SDCOA Legislative Affairs Committee, on January 5, 2022.

Respectfully,

Mary Arlington  
Executive Director

January 23, 2022

South Dakota Game, Fish, Parks Commission:

I am writing you today as a concerned taxpayer who **opposes 2022 SD H 1048 (Custer State Park Expansion)**. I have contacted all 13 House Ag Natural Resources Committee to convey my opposition to the proposed Custer State Park expansion. I'm sure we can all agree that South Dakota is a special place and even more so, Custer State Park. There are three main reasons I oppose this expansion:

- 1) Potential affect on wildlife and the land. In a world where land continues to get paved over and developed at an increasing rate, legislative leaders should recognize that further commercializing the Park is in direct opposition to the purpose of the park in the first place – a place that provides sanctuary to both wildlife and humans alike. It is a very fine line and as CSP has expanded development in recent years (large cabins, visitor center, etc.) the park has already seen congestion that has affected its tranquility.
- 2) The Park's ability to maintain what it currently has developed and services related to that. One visible example is the rough and deteriorating condition of Playhouse Road. It has been a rough road for at least two years. Would taxpayer money not be better utilized to focus on updating and maintaining current infrastructure before adding to that burden? The Park has also allowed continued expansion of additional large cabins in recent years (Reunion Cabin for example) and the visitor center that has already created congestion and wear-and-tear on roads.
- 3) Promote South Dakota private businesses and the ability of private campgrounds to meet the need. The top politicians in the state publicly state that they are trying to create a small-business friendly environment in South Dakota and are against government competition. It is estimated that there are 25 private campgrounds within 35 miles of CSP. As a frequent recreational camper, myself, it is known that a person can find several private camping options within reasonable distance whether it be a beautiful state park like CSP or even national parks. Further, as an economy that depends heavily on tourism, encouraging and supporting small businesses to meet the need that does not utilize taxpayer money is a win-win.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter from a concerned taxpayer. I will leave you with a timeless quote from Badger Clark:

***"Custer State Park is a place where one can still be an unworried and unregimented individual and wear any old clothes and sit on a log and get their sanity back again."***

Let's keep it that way.

Sincerely,



Nancy Hamak  
Keystone, South Dakota  
605.209.9807



## *High Plains Wildlife Association*

February 16, 2022

Dear Commissioner:

I am submitting this letter on behalf of the High Plains Wildlife Association in strong opposition to the proposed Oahe Dam State Waterfowl Refuge Expansion.

The High Plains Wildlife Association is a nonprofit conservation organization established in 1973, with approximately 100 members in the Pierre/Ft. Pierre, SD area. High Plains Wildlife Association, which is an affiliate of the South Dakota Wildlife Federation (SDWF), was founded in the interest of preserving quality hunting and fishing opportunities, conserving our natural resources (wildlife habitat and clean waterways), promoting the use of public lands, and the education of our youth to preserve our hunting, fishing, and outdoor heritage.

The proposed refuge expansion goes against many interests of the High Plains Wildlife Association and sportsman/woman of South Dakota. The proposal closes waterfowl hunting opportunities on 3,000 acres of the most accessible public land within 10 miles of Pierre. These areas provide ample opportunity for both decoy hunting on the water and pass shooting and have done so for generations of waterfowl hunters. Many youth hunters in the Pierre/Ft. Pierre area learned to waterfowl hunt (including myself) within the proposed refuge expansion. To recruit, retain, and reactive waterfowl hunters in South Dakota it requires access to quality hunting opportunities. The Department of Game, Fish, and Parks and the Commission along with organizations like High Plains Wildlife Association, SDWF and the South Dakota Migratory Bird Association should be finding ways to create and/or expand the quality hunting opportunities we have, not take them away as this proposal would accomplish.

The High Plains Wildlife Association **will not support ANY loss of public hunting opportunity** without a guarantee of creating more opportunities in return. The only guarantee of the proposed refuge expansion is the elimination of waterfowl hunting opportunities on 3,000 acres of public land with only "hopes" that more geese will use the area.

Sincerely,

Andy Vandel, President  
High Plains Wildlife Association  
300 S. Harrison Ave.  
Pierre, SD 57501  
605-280-2981  
andyvandel@gmail.com

I strongly oppose this proposal, and I am asking the Commission to oppose it as well.

The proposal to increase the Oahe Dam State Waterfowl Refuge will restrict waterfowl hunting on over 3,000 acres of public land and over 50 miles of lakeshore. This closure will take away countless opportunities for both local hunters, and hunters that travel to our community to hunt and spend their money here. This proposal also will further facilitate the expansion of commercialized hunting and the “pay to play” barriers that are driving folks away from the outdoors.

It is important to note that this proposal will not attract more Canada Geese. The geese will not simply show up earlier and stay later because there is a larger refuge. They will not shorten their stays in Canada or in North Dakota, simply to visit this refuge. They do not think as humans do. Their actions and movements are based off of weather patterns, available feed, and changing seasons.

The most obvious way to tell that this proposal is bad for South Dakota sportsmen and women is the fact that it does not check a single box on for the R3 criteria.

1: It greatly inhibits a user’s ability to participate by closing over 3,000 acres of public land and over 50 miles of shoreline.

2: It does not increase opportunities for new and existing users, as it restricts waterfowl hunting on public lands and waters.

3: It greatly restricts the next generation of waterfowl hunters by closing public lands and waters to hunting opportunities that are currently free and open to all.

4: It does not enhance the quality of life for current and future generations by getting families outdoors. It takes away places that families are currently able to use and enjoy freely. It also shifts the hunting opportunities from public lands that are accessible for all, to privately owned fields in the area are often leased by outfitters or guide services. These leases or guided hunts often come with price tags that almost all families cannot afford, hence degrading the quality of life and opportunity for those families to hunt together.

There are countless bays and backwater areas on lower Lake Oahe for geese to seek refuge, which they already do. The expansion of the State Refuge comes with no guarantee other than the closure of public lands and waters. Again, I am asking the Commission to oppose this unnecessary proposal which is based off of no factual data or professional recommendation by Game Fish and Parks personnel.

Thank you.

William Schwarz

Pierre, SD



SOUTH DAKOTA  
DIVISION

# The Izaak Walton League of America

DEFENDERS OF SOIL, AIR, WOODS, WATERS, AND WILDLIFE

February 20, 2022

Re: Missouri River Waterfowl Refuge Proposal  
South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks Commission  
523 East Capital Avenue  
Pierre, SD 57501

Dear Commissioner,

The South Dakota Division of the Izaak Walton League of America appreciates the opportunity to comment on the proposal to expand the waterfowl refuge on the Missouri River near Pierre-Fort Pierre that resulted from discussion during your January meeting.

The Division respectfully asks you to deny this proposal. The League and the Division strive to involve more adults and kids in sustainable and ethical outdoor activities. We're strong supporters of the R3 initiative to Recruit, Retain and Reactivate more people in the outdoors. We believe this expansion proposal goes entirely against R3 goals.

If adopted, this proposal would greatly modify existing refuge boundaries, increasing the size of the refuge by over 440%. The proposed expansion eliminates existing waterfowl hunting opportunities on public water and public land. This at the same time the department, and many organizations, are working to increase participation in waterfowl and other forms of hunting. The proposal would have major impacts not just for hunters in the Pierre-Fort Pierre area but also for the people that come to central South Dakota to hunt waterfowl on and along the Missouri River.

The South Dakota Division of the Izaak Walton League of America asks you to deny this proposal and make no adjustments to the boundaries of this refuge. Thank you for the opportunity to comment and thank you for your service to the state on the commission.

Sincerely,

President of the South Dakota Division of the IWLA  
603 Lakeshore Drive  
McCook Lake, SD 57049  
605-232-2030 (H) – 712-490-1726 (C)  
[iwlasdpresident@outlook.com](mailto:iwlasdpresident@outlook.com)

TO: SD GFP & GFP Commission Members

FR: David J Ode, Pierre, SD

RE: Opposition to proposed Oahe Dam Waterfowl Refuge Expansion

The proposed Oahe Dam Refuge expansion is thinly veiled assault on public waterfowl hunters in an attempt to force them pay certain private landowners for commercial goose hunting, by depriving them from near-by public land hunting opportunities.

I've hunted ducks and geese in the Pierre area for over forty years and the proposed refuge expansion does nothing to enhance the Pierre area for waterfowl or waterfowl hunting. Instead, it only eliminates waterfowl hunting opportunity. The deep water of lower Oahe Reservoir is already a defacto refuge because it's impossible to hunt on such deep water. The river from LaFramboise through Farm Island has held geese for decades without being a waterfowl refuge. I've hunted this reach innumerable times – over the water with decoys and pass shooting from the public land. The proposed refuge expansion would directly diminish my hunting opportunities.

Please oppose this misguided proposal.

John Murphy  
Game, Fish, & Parks

After reading the informative article about refuge expansion around the Pierre/Ft. Pierre area in the *Capitol Journal*, I felt it necessary to address many of the claims made by one Larry Steffen.

- 1) First of all, this proposal is a self-serving ploy by Steffen to enhance the goose hunting on his property and for his hunting lodge. It will not increase WATERfowling opportunities, only decrease the amount of available WATERfowling areas where waterfowlers can actually hunt the water around the area. (It was called WATERFOWLING long before the advent of pits, low profile lay-out blinds and the acres and acres of corn we now have for on-ground hunting.) The loss of almost 15,000 acres of huntable area is unconscionable, particularly when our Game, Fish, and Parks Department (GF&P) is trying to encourage hunting opportunities and new hunters. (By using the 3 R's—Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation of veteran hunters whom we have seen opt out of hunting because of things just like this.)
- 2) Chad Sovitz of your GFP commented that "...it's unknown if the proposed refuge change would enhance waterfowl hunting opportunities..." Common sense would tell us that of course losing 15,000 acres of huntable area would impact hunters and would in no way enhance hunting opportunities except for those owning/leasing land near the Missouri River. He also stated that "... economic and fiscal impact is hard to estimate..." and that he "... could not think of any positive or negative impact that this increase in the {refuge} boundary would affect." Economics 101 would tell us that less area to hunt would lead to fewer hunters, which in turn leads to less revenue for the entire area. Who benefits? Landowners/lessees on the river and those running commercial hunting properties.
- 3) Steffen goes on to espouse that we have declining numbers of geese in the area. Possibly true for most of the season but the final month of the season saw a great influx of waterfowl—both ducks and geese—making it very much like the good old days with thousands and thousands of ducks and geese arriving from Canada and North Dakota. It's an age-old phenomenon known as shortstopping—as long as the birds have food, water and a place to roost they stay put until driven out by the weather. Shortstopping has

now become the norm for most of the country—just ask those disappointed hunters in the Southern states.

- 4) Steffen goes on to say that GFP should make hunters stay on the hills around the river which “...opens up miles and miles of excellent waterfowling.” Bunk! That is not waterfowling, that is simply pass shooting and sky busting—shooting at birds that are far out of range of even the most accomplished shooters. No boat, no decoys, no calling—all time-honored traditions in the glorious sport of waterfowling. I don’t really think we should lose that tradition, do you? Not to mention that it is not ‘excellent’ hunting, as he states but pretty much luck if you hit one. It can be extremely dangerous for passing motorists when dead, or most likely wounded geese fall on the adjoining highway. (We had a greater Canada hit the pavement right beside us this fall—about scared my wife half-to-death!) Contrary to what is stated, the top of the hill is not one of the best public hunting areas around. A goose is occasionally taken but with most shots rarely less than 100 yards and some out to 150 yards, not many shooters are successful.
- 5) He goes on to state “...you have to give the geese a safety zone.” If you look at all the refuges bordering the river, there is ample room for the birds to loaf and to be safe—they already do it now. They rarely leave the safety of those refuges during most of their day, only going out to feed late. If more hunting opportunities are really the goal, then the existing refuges should shrink down, not expand. The birds will adjust when the shooting starts anyway.

6)

This particular proposal should be dead in the proverbial water until some type of biological and economic impact study is completed. Your professional waterfowl biologists on staff could and should undertake such a study along with the cities over a 2-to-5 year period of time to see what the actual impact would be. As a concerned duck hunter of 56 years, I wish you would look at all the ramifications of making such a decision would have on the area.

Respectfully submitted,

Monty Carr  
318 Goose Pass Road  
Pierre, SD

February 17, 2022

GFP Commission  
Kevin Robling, Secretary  
Tom Kirschenmann, Wildlife Division Director



George Vandel, President  
South Dakota Waterfowl Association  
911 Woodridge Dr.  
Pierre, South Dakota 57501

Dear Sirs:

I have included for your use and review our rationale to formally oppose adoption of your January 2022 rule proposal to significantly expand the existing Missouri River Waterfowl refuges both above and below Oahe Dam.

On behalf of the SD Waterfowl Association, we strongly encourage you to not adopt the refuge modification. We are opposed to any reduction in public waterfowl hunting opportunities in the Pierre area.

Should you choose to compromise and adopt some form of waterfowl refuge involving the areas outlined in the proposal we request that it be re-proposed for us to review and formally comment on any changes. Our preference would be that the proposal be fully and totally rejected by the Commission and if there is a desire to review any Missouri River Waterfowl Refuges now or in the future that the SD Waterfowl Association be included in a public involvement process prior to any formal rule proposals.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

  
George Vandel, President

enclosure

## Waterfowl Refuge Expansion Facts

February, 2022

- The refuge would close approximately 3,000 acres of highly accessible public land (Game Production Areas – land owned in fee title and property taxes paid by GFP Wildlife Division) and approximately 50 miles of shoreline to public waterfowl hunting.
- It will not attract new birds to the area as nothing migrates out of North Dakota and/or Canada until winter weather freezes water and snow covers food.
- There are zero acres of additional public hunting provided by this refuge proposal – only a significant loss of existing public hunting opportunities.
- This refuge proposal is based on erroneous and totally unproven “wing and prayer” that the public will benefit as “pass over geese” find, use and stay in this refuge. The unfounded promise is that public hunters either get better goose hunting on the Sheehan area or get permission to hunt geese on adjoining private land.
- This proposal eliminates over the water decoy hunting and pass shooting reducing traditional waterfowl hunting choices forcing hunters to only field hunting.
- As proposed it will not retain, recruit or reactivate waterfowl hunters. It significantly reduces waterfowl hunting choices and public hunting access opportunities in the Pierre area thus waterfowl hunter numbers will decline.
- Recent surveys of waterfowl hunters by both SDGFP and nationally by Delta Waterfowl indicate the number one reason hunters quit waterfowl hunting is a loss of access.
- A recent workshop of waterfowl hunters was hosted by SD GFP in Pierre. The main conclusion of the meeting was a need to increase waterfowl hunter access sites to recruit, retain and reactivate resident waterfowl hunters,
- In truth, and as most Missouri River Waterfowl Refuges function, only those who own or control the adjoining private land actually benefit.
- The existing 21 Missouri River Waterfowl Refuges are more than adequate to hold birds during most of the season. In fact, only a few of the existing refuges function to hold waterfowl and even fewer hold birds that provide public hunting opportunities.
- We agree with and support recommendations from the SDGFP Wildlife Division staff that the refuge expansion proposal will reduce waterfowl hunting opportunities and will not provide additional benefits to the public. The cost is too high and the benefits are too low.

## Proposed Refuge Above Oahe Dam

- The area is accessed by: State Highway 1804 on the north and 1806 on the south, 3 public boat ramps and approximately 10 roads and section lines.
- The area tends to hold high concentrations of both mallards and Canada geese late in the season as other Lake Oahe Waterfowl Refuges ice up and birds move to areas that are last on Lake Oahe to freeze up.
- Although the waterfowl in this area are heavily hunted at times, this late in the season birds currently stay in the area and provide good hunting opportunities for all waterfowl hunters. Disturbed birds simply fly to open water or to the bays and shoreline unused by hunters.
- Birds do not leave the area due to hunting pressure. They only leave when their food is covered with snow or Lake Oahe freezes over completely.
- This refuge would eliminate some of the best public accessible late season mallard hunting in South Dakota. Untold numbers of duck hunters use boats, walk in with decoys and/or pass shoot mallards in this area.
- This refuge would eliminate some of the best public accessible late season goose hunting in South Dakota. Although some goose hunting occurs over the water, the majority of goose hunters successfully pass shoot birds on the adjoining public land bluffs, points and ridges.
- On Friday, February 11 there were a minimum of 20 vehicles parked within the proposed refuge. Virtually every available location on the proposed refuge was being used by public waterfowl hunters.
- The claim that “500 miles of shoreline on the west side of Lake Oahe downstream of the Whitlocks Bridge is open for hunting” is false. All of Lake Oahe bordering the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe above the flood pool elevation is closed to public hunting. The duck hunting reality is that flocks of mallards only use a few of the bays on Lake Oahe outside of the existing refuges and their use is dependent on migration and weather patterns. Every year is different and requires hours of scouting for a successful hunt.

## Proposed Refuge Below Oahe Dam

- The proposed refuge below Oahe Dam is bordered on the North by the Lewis and Clark bike trail, Farm Island Recreation Area and City of Pierre property. It is accessible by boat at the Polo Field Boat ramp and public boat ramps in both Pierre and Ft. Pierre.
- The area currently provides access to hunters in small boats as they hunt the islands and sand bars downstream from the existing LaFramboise Island Waterfowl Refuge. Until the Polo Field boat ramp freezes up, hunters in smaller boats can easily, safely, and successfully hunt these public islands and sandbars. These traditional sites have been hunted since the reservoir system was created.
- These accessible areas are great for recruiting new or youth hunters to waterfowl hunting. It's a simple, safe and successful place to share with novice waterfowl hunters.
- Much of the land area is presently closed to hunting and will remain closed. The City of Pierre property is closed, much of the Farm Island Recreation area is closed and all of the private land south of the river, owned by the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, is closed to public hunting.
- The water involved in the proposed refuge will still be open to public use and is heavily used by fisherman on any day the wind doesn't blow and temperatures are above freezing. Good fall and winter walleye fishing is used both within the proposed refuge and especially the river downstream all the way to Stony Point.
- On the day before the High Plains Duck Season closed this Jan., there were 9 empty boat trailers at the Ft. Pierre boat ramp and 3 at the Pierre Causeway ramp. Only 3 boats were observed above the bridges with most fisherman going downstream, into and through the proposed refuge.
- The new refuge would only prohibit waterfowl hunting and would not eliminate boat traffic.
- This refuge will not function as suggested since heavy boat traffic will still occur.

Tim Olson  
215 S Buchanan Ave  
Pierre, SD 57501

February 23, 2022

SD GF&P Commissioners:

I write to respectfully ask all of you to not support any expansion of the Oahe Dam State Waterfowl Refuge on lower Lake Oahe and upper Lake Sharpe near Pierre.

On a blustery day last month my 12-year-old son killed his first Canada Goose hunting on the public land river bluffs overlooking Lake Oahe. The last thing young hunters and future license buyers like him need is fewer places to go. Opportunities to hunt over decoys on the water or to pass shoot waterfowl on public lands adjacent to the river should not be restricted further. Instead, I urge you to critically review the real need for all Missouri River refuges with one simple metric in mind – does each refuge truly provide enhanced hunting opportunities without overwhelmingly favoring one type of hunter over the other (e.g., over-water hunters vs. field hunters or public land hunters vs. those hunting with commercial outfitters).

I have hunted and observed waterfowl on and along the Missouri River reservoirs near Pierre for over 33 years. Due primarily to its' sheer size, the entire reservoir system effectively functions as a waterfowl refuge, with or without the formally designated refuges. Birds disturbed by over-the-water hunters on one part of the reservoir simply move to a different bay or to an area further from shore. There is no good evidence that greatly expanding areas off-limits to over-the-water hunting with decoys and pass shooting will result in more waterfowl remaining in the area or improved field hunting opportunities. Severe weather, and most importantly, lack of access to feed in harvested agricultural fields due to excessive snow cover have long been observed to be the primary reasons waterfowl leave the Pierre area.

I urge you to oppose further elimination of high-quality waterfowl hunting opportunities on the Missouri River system based on the mythical notion that yet another refuge is necessary to sustain the waterfowl hunting tradition near Pierre.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,



Tim Olson