



SOUTH DAKOTA GAME, FISH AND PARKS COMMISSION MEETING AGENDA

SEPTEMBER 10-11, 2026 | WINNER, SD
HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS

MEETING INFO

This agenda is subject to change without prior notice.

Date and Time: September 10, 2026, from 1-5 pm CST and September 11, 2026, from 8 am-12 pm CST

Meeting Location: Holiday Inn Express, 1360 SD-44, Winner, SD 57580

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

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

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

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Meeting ID: 912 6417 6710

Passcode: 970458

Video Conference ID: 91264176710@zoomcrc.com

AGENDA

Call Meeting to Order (1 pm CST / 12 pm MT)

Division of Administration

Action Items

1. Conflict of Interest Disclosure
2. Executive Session
 - a. Contractual Matters
3. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes available at <https://gfp.sd.gov/commission/archives>
4. Additional Commissioner Salary Days
5. License List Request

Informational Items

6. Staff Introductions

Public Hearing

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

Open Forum (2 pm CST / 1 pm MT)

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

Finalizations

7. Fishing Seasons and Regulations
8. Threatened and Endangered List

Division of Parks and Recreation

Action Items

9. Custer State Park Resorts Prospectus and Proposal Selection

Informational Items

10. Dock 44 Prospectus
11. Capital Development Project Planning & Selection Process
12. Adventure 250 Program Update
13. Fall Events in the Parks Division
14. Fall Lodging and Camping Opportunities
15. July and August Monthly and YTD Revenue and Camping Reports

Division of Wildlife

Action Items

16. Elk Contingency Licenses

Informational Items

17. Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD)
18. Outdoor Campus East Gear Giveaway
19. Private and Public Lands Habitat Biologist Project Highlights
20. Law Enforcement Case Highlight
21. Pheasant and Grouse Outlook
22. License Sales Report

Solicitation of Agenda Items

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

Adjourn

The next Regular Commission Meeting will be held on October 8-9, 2026 starting at 1 pm CST at the State Library, Pierre, SD.



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July 9-10, 2026 | The Galley, Webster, SD

REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING

Call Meeting to Order

Chair Rissler called the meeting to order at 1 pm CST at The Galley, in Webster, SD on July 9, 2026. Commissioners Stephanie Rissler, Bruce Cull, Travis Theel, Chuck Spring, Dean Kirkeby, Robert Whitmyre, and Kevin Nyberg were present. Commissioner Julie Bartling joined the meeting virtually. With eight commission members present or online, a quorum was established. The public and staff could listen via SDPB Livestream and participate via conference or in person, with approximately 74 total participants attending via Zoom or in person.

1. Conflict of Interest Disclosure

[Action Item]

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

2. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

[Action Item]

Chair Rissler called for any additions or corrections to the regular minutes of the June 2026 meeting. Minutes are available at <https://gfp.sd.gov/commission/archives/>.

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

3. Additional Commissioner Salary Days

[Action Item]

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

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

4. License List Request

[Action Item]

Deputy Secretary Simpson, presented to the commission a license list request from Ian Meriwether-Chalfant, Airport Manager in Watertown. The purpose of the list request for marketing the Watertown Regional Airport to non-resident pheasant hunters who have driven, or are considering driving considerable distances to their NE SD hunting destination.

MOTIONED BY THEEL, SECONDED BY CULL TO APPROVE THE LICENSE LIST REQUEST. The motion carried unanimously.

5. New Staff Introductions

[Info Item]

Jeff VanMeeteren, Director of Parks & Recreation, introduced two new employees for the Parks Division: 1) Ethan Vetsch – Park Maintenance Technician at Oahe Downstream Recreation Area, and 2) Norm Neilan - Park Maintenance Technician at Spring Creek Recreation Area. Nick Michels, Staff Attorney, introduced one new employee, Will Peniston, who joined the administrative team as an attorney.

Public Hearing

Senior Staff Attorney Nick Michels opened the floor at 2:01 pm CST for discussion from those in attendance in matters of importance to them that are listed on the agenda as finalization.

Agenda Item #11: General License Provisions

No testimony provided.



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Agenda Item #12: Spring and Fall Turkey Seasons

No testimony provided.

Agenda Item #13: Private Shooting Preserves

2:04 pm: Sal Roseland of Seneca, SD, representing the South Dakota Upland Outfitters Association, testified in person in support of the preserve finalization.

Senior Staff Attorney Michels closed the public hearing closed at 2:05 pm.

Open Forum

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

2:06 pm: Cody Warner, Day County resident, SD testified in person to thank Game, Fish and Parks along with the field staff.

2:09 pm: Representative Tim Goodwin of Rapid City, SD testified in person in opposition of nonresident mountain lion license petition and in support of a bear habitat study and having a bear hunting season.

2:12 pm: Doug Hansen of Webster, SD testified in person to thank the commission and the department for their cooperation with the conservation districts.

2:15 pm: Bob Berg of Crooks, SD testified in person to thank Game, Fish and Parks staff. He testified in support of trapping coyotes and mentioned it would be good to do in the fall. He is also in support of reducing paddlefish tags in the Yankton area. He also testified on the price of non-resident trophy buffalo hunts.

2:17 pm: Jerred Schreur of Bristol, SD testified in person about dates of the muzzleloader and archery deer seasons. He suggested having a muzzleloader season in early November.

2:21 pm: Sal Roseland of Seneca, SD, speaking on behalf of the Hyde County Sherriff's office, testified in person to thank Game, Fish and Parks for the assistance with storm clean up and patrols.

2:22 pm: Dana Rogers of Hill City, SD, representing the SD Wildlife Federation, testified virtually to thank staff that helped make the Youth Conservation Camp a success.

2:25 pm: Heath Weavill of Hill City, SD and vice president of the Black Hill Mountain Lion Foundation testified virtually to oppose nonresident mountain lion license petition.

2:26 pm: Julie Anderson of Rapid City, SD, representing Sign of Hope, testified virtually to oppose the non-resident mountain lion license petition, and she also testified requesting research on coyote population numbers in correlation to the bounty program. She also requests to receive the email notification of the meeting at the same time the agenda is posted online.

2:28 pm: Nancy Hilding of Rapid City, SD, representing the Prairie Hills Audubon Society, testified virtually in opposition of the non-resident mountain lion license petition, and also testified requesting the black bear be added to the threatened and endangered species list if there is confirmation of bears not breeding.

Senior Staff Attorney Michels closed the open forum at 2:32 pm CST.



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6. Petition 259 Archery Paddlefish Transport

[Action Item: Petition]

Wildlife Director Kirschenmann shared with the Commission the details of the petition. It was also shared that internal discussions agreed with the petitioner's request and included the change as part of the overall fish regulation recommendations to the Commission. After further discussion with Mr. Mines, he submitted an email to the agency requesting his petition be withdrawn. No action was needed by the Commission.

7. Petition 260 Residency Mountain Lion Hunting Requirements

[Action Item: Petition]

Allowance of Nonresidents to Acquire Mountain Lion License. Director Kirschenmann introduced the petition submitted by Mr. Clayton from Oklahoma which asked for licenses to be available to non-residents to hunt in the Black Hills by foot only. Mr. Clayton addressed the Commission and described his petition. Director Kirschenmann provided reasons for the departments recommendation for denial which included the following reasons: 1. all data used to estimate the lion population is not currently available at this time and changing the season structure to allow additional hunting should be held off to a later date; 2. a public opinion survey completed in 2024 indicated that both residents of the Black Hills and resident hunters were opposed to opening the season up to nonresident hunters; and 3. a stakeholder meeting in 2024 also showed no interest to have nonresident lion hunters. The Commission made the determination to deny the petition.

The Commission also adopted Resolution 26-03 which outlined the reasons and justification for denying the petition submitted by Mr. Clayton.

MOTIONED BY THEEL, SECONDED BY SPRING TO DENY THE PETITION. The motion carried unanimously.

RESOLUTION 26-03

WHEREAS, Jason Clayton of Faxon, Oklahoma, submitted a Petition to the Game, Fish and Parks Commission (Commission) dated June 30, 2026, requesting that the Game, Fish and Parks Commission amend ARSD § 41:06:61:06 (Application requirements - License and season restrictions - Special conditions - Carcass check-in procedures) – to remove the requirement of South Dakota residency in order to pursue mountain lions in the Black Hills Fire Protection District without the use of dogs for the reasons more fully set out in the petition (hereinafter referred to as “the Petition”); and

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, the Commission has reviewed and carefully considered the requirements and procedures set out in SDCL §1-26-13 and the contents of the Petition, including the reasons advanced by Petitioner in support to allow nonresidents to hunt mountain lions in the Black Hills Fire Protection District; and



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WHEREAS, not all data is currently available to generate the population estimate and thus further changes to season structure that may impact harvest would be premature; and

WHEREAS, a South Dakota mountain lion management public opinion survey from 2024 indicated that 57% of Black Hills residents and 68% of mountain lion hunters opposed nonresident mountain lion harvest; and

WHEREAS, a South Dakota mountain lion management stakeholder group met in 2024 and there were no stakeholders in support of allowing nonresident mountain lion harvest; and

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

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

MOTIONED BY CULL, SECONDED BY NYBERG TO APPROVE THE RESOLUTION. The motion carried unanimously.

8. Fishing Seasons and Regulations Proposals

[Action Item: Proposal]

Staff brought Department proposals from the Wildlife Division including recommended changes to the Aquatic Invasive Species, Bait, Fish Limits, Fishing Tournaments, Importation of Fish and the Paddlefish Season chapters of Administrative Rules. Specifically, they include adding Golden mussels to the current list of Aquatic Invasive Species and removing Common reed from the exemption that allows for vegetation to be attached to a watercraft during launching or removal at a waterbody. Additional recommendation were to return Reetz lake daily harvest limits to statewide limits, modify the daily muskellunge limit to 1 daily, 2 in possession with a 45-inch minimum, remove the annual reporting requirement for retail bait dealers, clarify that a fishing tournament cannot occur on the Friday before the 4th of July if the 4th falls on a weekend, modify the list of fish pathogens and remove the cleaning restriction for the June archery paddlefish season below Gavins Point Dam.

MOTIONED BY CULL, SECONDED BY KIRKEBY TO APPROVE THE PROPOSAL FOR AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES. FINAL ACTION WILL BE TAKEN IN SEPTEMBER. Motion carried unanimously.

MOTIONED BY WHITMYRE, SECONDED BY THEEL TO APPROVE THE PROPOSAL FOR BAIT. FINAL ACTION WILL BE TAKEN IN SEPTEMBER. Motion carried unanimously.

MOTIONED BY CULL, SECONDED BY THEEL TO APPROVE THE PROPOSAL FOR FISH LIMITS. FINAL ACTION WILL BE TAKEN IN SEPTEMBER. Motion carried unanimously.

MOTIONED BY NYBERG, SECONDED BY WHITMYRE TO APPROVE THE PROPOSAL FOR FISH TOURNAMENTS. FINAL ACTION WILL BE TAKEN IN SEPTEMBER. Motion carried unanimously.

MOTIONED BY THEEL, SECONDED BY WHITMYRE TO APPROVE THE PROPOSAL FOR IMPORTATION OF FISH. FINAL ACTION WILL BE TAKEN IN SEPTEMBER. Motion carried unanimously.



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MOTIONED BY CULL, SECONDED BY THEEL TO APPROVE THE PROPOSAL FOR THE PADDLEFISH SEASON. FINAL ACTION WILL BE TAKEN IN SEPTEMBER. Motion carried unanimously.

9. Bobcat Season and Population Status

[Action Item: Proposal]

Staff presented information on the bobcat population status, and the Commission proposed the 2026-2027 and 2027-2028 Bobcat Hunting Season with no recommended changes to administrative rule from past years.

10. Threatened and Endangered List Proposal and Review Process Presentation [Action Item: Proposal]

Staff presented information on their review of the endangered and threatened state species list and the Commission proposed to remove the Eskimo curlew and least tern from the list of endangered birds.

The Eskimo curlew is believed to be extinct throughout its range and the least tern has met recovery criteria. Changes were also recommended related to recovery criteria for osprey, peregrine falcon, eastern hog-nosed snake, and the lined snake.

MOTIONED BY NYBERG, SECONDED BY THEEL TO APPROVE THE PROPOSAL. FINAL ACTION WILL BE TAKEN IN SEPTEMBER. Motion carried unanimously.

11. General License Provisions

[Action Item: Finalization]

The Commission finalized the removal of “polished antler” and replaced with “antler” from the definition of a buck and bull to allow an individual to harvest a velvet antlered deer or elk.

MOTIONED BY CULL, SECONDED BY THEEL TO APPROVE THE FINALIZATION. Motion carried unanimously.

12. Spring and Fall Turkey Seasons

[Action Item: Finalization]

The Commission made several changes to the spring and fall turkey seasons, presented by Andrew Norton, Wildlife Program Administrator.

For the Spring Turkey Season, references to federal property closures were removed from administrative rule and the Day and Codington County combined unit was separated into county specific units for Day (PST-22A) and Codington (PST-05A) counties.

Changes to the Fall Turkey Season include a weapons restriction change allowing for the use of rifles or shotguns for hunting turkeys in the fall for all units, except for Minnehaha County. In addition, the changes to fall turkey unit boundaries will result in the same Spring and Fall turkey unit boundaries for all units, except for the Black Hills.

The Commission closed Bennett and Sanborn counties to spring firearm turkey hunting. The Commission closed Gregory and Mellette counties to fall turkey hunting, and opened Hughes County. All spring and fall turkey hunting season unit license numbers were finalized.

MOTIONED BY THEEL, SECONDED BY NYBERG TO APPROVE THE SPRING WILD TURKEY HUNTING SEASON FINALIZATION. Motion carried unanimously.

MOTIONED BY NYBERG, SECONDED BY WHITMYRE TO APPROVE THE FALL WILD TURKEY HUNTING SEASON FINALIZATION. Motion carried unanimously.

MOTIONED BY THEEL, SECONDED BY CULL TO APPROVE THE TURKEY HUNTING LICENSE NUMBERS FINALIZATION. Motion carried unanimously.



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Recommended 2027 and 2028 Spring Turkey Licenses.

Unit #	Unit Name	Resident		Nonresident		Resident		Nonresident	
		TomT 32	2 TomT 35	TomT 32	2 TomT 35	Licenses	Tags	Licenses	Tags
BH1	Black Hills	UNL		2,225		UNL	UNL	2225	2225
CSP	Custer State Park	100				100	100		
01A	Minnehaha	100				100	100		
02A	Pennington	250		20		250	250	20	20
05A	Codington*	80				80	80		
06A	Brookings	80				80	80		
07A	Yankton	300				300	300		
08A	Davison/Hanson	100				100	100		
08B	Davison/Hanson	100				100	100		
10A	Aurora/Douglas	50				50	50		
11A	Bennett					0	0		
12A	Bon Homme	300				300	300		
13A	Brule/Buffalo	175				175	175		
15A	Butte/Lawrence	400		32		400	400	32	32
16A	Campbell/Walworth	20				20	20		
17A	Charles Mix	350				350	350		
19A	Clay	120				120	120		
20A	Corson	100		8		100	100	8	8
21A	Custer/Pennington	125		10		125	125	10	10
22A	Day*	80				80	80		
23A	Deuel	250				250	250		
24A	Dewey/Ziebach	150		12		150	150	12	12
27A	Fall River	150		12		150	150	12	12
29A	Grant	400				400	400		
30A	Gregory	450		36		450	450	36	36
31A	Haakon		250		20	250	500	20	40
32A	Hamlin/Clark	20				20	20		
35A	Harding	150		12		150	150	12	12
36A	Hughes	35				35	35		
37A	Hutchinson	70				70	70		
39A	Jackson	200		16		200	200	16	16
40A	Jerauld/Beadle/Hand	20				20	20		
41A	Jones	75		6		75	75	6	6
44A	Lincoln	50				50	50		
44B	Lincoln	50				50	50		
45A	Lyman	150		12		150	150	12	12
48A	Marshall/Roberts	450				450	450		
49A	Meade		400		32	400	800	32	64
50A	Mellette	300		24		300	300	24	24
52A	Moody	60				60	60		
53A	Perkins	100		8		100	100	8	8
56A	Sanborn					0	0		
58A	Stanley	40		4		40	40	4	4
58B	Stanley	2		1		2	2	1	1
60A	Tripp	400		32		400	400	32	32
61A	Turner	30				30	30		
62A	Union	120				120	120		
65A	Oglala Lakota	40		4		40	40	4	4
67A	Todd	50		4		50	50	4	4
	TOTAL	6,642	650	2,478	52	7,292	7,942	2,530	2,582
	Unit	TomT 32	2 TomT 35	TomT 32	2 TomT 35	RES Licenses	RES Tags	NR Lic	NR Tags
RES & NR:						9,822	10,524		

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

Unit 22A was both Day and Codington counties in 2025 and 2026. Those units are proposed to be split in 2027.



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Recommended 2026 and 2027 Fall Turkey resident license number changes by unit compared to the previous 2 years.

Unit #	Unit Name	2024-2025 Resident Licenses	2026-2027 Resident Licenses	# Change	% Change	2024-2025 Resident Tags	2026-2027 Resident Tags	# Change	% Change
01A	Minnehaha	25	25	0	0%	25	25	0	0%
02A	Pennington	50	50	0	0%	50	50	0	0%
06A	Brookings	20	20	0	0%	20	20	0	0%
07A	Yankton	175	175	0	0%	175	175	0	0%
08A	Davison/Hanson	50	50	0	0%	50	50	0	0%
10A*	Aurora/Douglas	25	25	0	0%	25	25	0	0%
12A	Bon Homme	175	175	0	0%	175	175	0	0%
13A	Brule/Buffalo	50	50	0	0%	50	50	0	0%
15A	Butte/Lawrence	75	75	0	0%	150	150	0	0%
17A	Charles Mix	50	50	0	0%	50	50	0	0%
21A	Custer/Pennington	50	50	0	0%	50	50	0	0%
24A	Dewey/Ziebach	50	50	0	0%	50	50	0	0%
29A	Grant	125	150	25	20%	125	150	25	20%
30A	Gregory	50	0	-50	-100%	50	0	-50	-100%
31A	Haakon	50	50	0	0%	50	50	0	0%
35A	Harding	50	50	0	0%	50	50	0	0%
36A	Hughes	0	10	10	NA	0	10	10	NA
39A	Jackson	75	100	25	33%	150	200	50	33%
45A	Lyman	50	50	0	0%	50	50	0	0%
48A	Marshall/Roberts	100	100	0	0%	100	100	0	0%
49A	Meade	50	50	0	0%	50	50	0	0%
50A	Mellette	25	0	-25	-100%	25	0	-25	-100%
52A	Moody	25	25	0	0%	25	25	0	0%
53A	Perkins	50	25	-25	-50%	50	25	-25	-50%
58A	Stanley	25	25	0	0%	25	25	0	0%
60A	Tripp	50	50	0	0%	50	50	0	0%
BH1	Black Hills	200	100	-100	-50%	200	100	-100	-50%
TOTAL		1,720	1,580	-140	-8%	1,870	1,755	-115	-6%

Recommended 2026 and 2027 Fall Turkey Licenses.

Unit #	Unit Name	Resident		Nonresident		License Totals			
		AnyT	2 AnyT	AnyT	2 AnyT	Resident		Nonresident	
		31	37	31	37	Licenses	Tags	Licenses	Tags
01A	Minnehaha	25				25	25		
02A	Pennington	50		4		50	50	4	4
06A	Brookings	20				20	20		
07A	Yankton	175				175	175		
08A	Davison/Hanson	50				50	50		
10A*	Aurora/Douglas	25				25	25		
12A	Bon Homme	175				175	175		
13A	Brule/Buffalo	50				50	50		
15A	Butte/Lawrence		75		6	75	150	6	12
17A	Charles Mix	50				50	50		
21A	Custer/Pennington	50		4		50	50	4	4
24A	Dewey/Ziebach	50		4		50	50	4	4
29A	Grant	150				150	150		
30A	Gregory								
31A	Haakon	50		4		50	50	4	4
35A	Harding	50		4		50	50	4	4
36A	Hughes	10				10	10		
39A	Jackson		100		8	100	200	8	16
45A	Lyman	50		4		50	50	4	4
48A	Marshall/Roberts	100				100	100		
49A	Meade	50		4		50	50	4	4
50A	Mellette								
52A	Moody	25				25	25		
53A	Perkins	25		2		25	25	2	2
58A	Stanley	25		2		25	25	2	2
60A	Tripp	50		4		50	50	4	4
BH1	Black Hills	100		8		100	100	8	8
TOTAL		1,405	175	44	14	1,580	1,755	58	72
RES & NR:						1,638	1,827		

Note: An additional 8% of licenses are available to nonresidents for the West River prairie units.

13. Private Shooting Preserves

[Action Item: Finalization]

Director Kirschenmann explained the finalization action sheet related to Private Shooting Preserves and the additional options the rule change would provide to operators wishing to transport harvested birds off the



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preserve acres to either their lodge of operation or processing facility. It was explained that this only pertains to birds harvested on permitted preserve acres and is not mandatory, rather an option if desired.

MOTIONED BY CULL, SECONDED BY NYBERG TO APPROVE THE FINALIZATION. Motion carried unanimously.

14. Dock 44 Update

[Info Item: Parks]

Sean Blanchette, Parks Division Business Administrator, provided an update on the Dock 44 concession prospectus which was approved for issuance by the Commission at the April meeting. The prospectus was issued on April 10, 2026, with a deadline to receive proposals of June 26, 2026. Based on recent interest received by the current Concessionaire, the Department has extended the prospectus for a month with a new deadline to receive proposals of July 31, 2026, to allow more time for parties to consider the opportunity. Blanchette stated that GFP will report the results to the Commission at the September meeting.

15. Marketing Update to Promote Camping

[Info Item: Parks]

Amy Bailey, marketing consultant for the Parks Division, provided a presentation highlighting marketing efforts to promote camping in the State Parks system. Information included priorities of camping increases, in-house messaging and social media tactics, GoOutdoors marketing efforts, details on paid marketing campaign with Lawrence & Schiller, traditional media efforts, as well as exploring new marketing channels.

16. Northeast Region Park Projects

[Info Item: Parks]

Willy Collignon, Northeast Region Park Supervisor reported on the recent projects completed in the northeast such as Pelican Lake Recreation Area's new welcome center, Fort Sisseton State Park's relocation of manager's residence, Roy Lake State Park Suite remodels completed with in-house staff and gave an overview of this next year's list of projects and diversity of improvements to meet or exceed park user's expectations, ensure facilities last for generations, build upon staff's skills and experience, and provide for future revenue needs.

17. Reservation Customer Service Review Process

[Info Item: Parks]

Willy Collignon, Northeast Region Park Supervisor shared an overview of the state parks' customer satisfaction survey that is sent to every camper following their reservation stay. They receive an email and choose to select the link and allowing them to complete a short 5 question survey or they can choose to drill down more in-depth to match their stay experience. Customers get to select from 1 (low) to 5 (high) rating in various experiences and facilities. Year to date the parks system has received 579 comments with an average overall satisfaction rating of 4.7 out of 5 stars. Collignon also shared how these surveys are utilized; 1. shared with staff for motivation and appreciation, 2. follow trending comments to improve the overall customer experience, 3. follow-up with customers that wish to engage staff further from their experience.

18. RTP Project Selection

[Info Item: Parks]

Al Nedved, Deputy Director for the Division of Parks and Recreation provided the Commission with an overview of recreational trails provided by the Division of Parks and Recreation. Recreational trails are featured in most parks and are a big part of the Division's services to park visitors. State Parks provide 405 miles of trails, 1,275 miles of snowmobile trails, 155 miles of canoe trails and host more than 1.6 million visits. Trail activities rank high nationally in participation rates, and the 2024 survey of state park campers indicated trails are very popular with South Dakota Campers as well. Nedved also highlighted some of the community – state park trail connections that the Department has cooperated on the past. Nedved also went over the Recreation Trail Program project allocation for FY27 of \$1,199,738. The Recreation Trails Council approved \$355,921 of motorized funding for the snowmobile program. Approved projects for state parks in FY27 include \$416,000 for Palisades State Park trail construction, Sandy Shore Recreation Area,



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and the George S. Mickelson Trail. Community grant proposals in the amount of \$359,921 was approved for projects in Aberdeen, Sioux Falls Great Bear Recreation Area, and Fort Pierre.

19. Events Manager Program and Summer Events

[Info Item: Parks]

Cassy Behnke, Parks Naturalist out of Watertown, provided an overview of current programming at the district, regional, and statewide levels. She highlighted recent summer programs across multiple parks, including education-focused activities, holiday events, and recreation-based programs that continue to strengthen visitor engagement and support both campers and day-users. An update on GoOutdoorsSD, including the upcoming Under-18 Single Sign-On Bypass was presented and she walked through how staff utilize the system to create, manage, and clone events, as well as how visitors search for, filter, and register for programs online. The growing consistency of statewide programming, increased ease of use for both staff and the public, and the continued impact these tools and programs have enhanced the outdoor experiences across the state.

20. June and YTD Camping and Revenue Report

[Info Item: Parks]

Jeff VanMeeteren, Director of Parks & Recreation, presented the June monthly and year-to-date report numbers for the Division of Parks & Recreation related to camping units and revenue. June camping units were down 4% for the month and 2% YTD. The Parks Division revenue was slightly ahead for the month of June compared to last year but down 2% YTD. Annual park entrance license sales remain very strong especially double license sales and the CSP 7-day permits. Also of note, advanced camping reservations saw an increase of 16% for the month of June adding to the positive growth for the month. The 3-year historical comparisons indicating revenue and permit sales were shared along with data on lodging and camping units.

21. Elk Raffle License

[Action Item: Wildlife]

Chad Switzer, Deputy Wildlife Director, presented a request for a 2027 South Dakota Special Elk tag to be used for a raffle for the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. The raffle must be conducted in accordance with the provision of 41:06:27:02:06.

MOTIONED BY CULL, SECONDED BY NYBERG TO APPROVE THE ELK RAFFLE LICENSE. Motion carried unanimously.

22. Roy Lake GPA Prescribed Burn Results

[Info Item: Wildlife]

Heath Stone, Park Manager and Owen McElroy, Habitat Program Manager both out of Watertown, provided an overview of the fall prescribe burn that was conducted on an island at Roy Lake State Park. Discussion was held about Common Buckthorn becoming an issue to the native woodlands of South Dakota. The island was picked as a test area to conduct the burn in a safe manner and to observe the effects that fire has on common buckthorn immediate post burn and the following year. Staff presented on its finding and how fire is beneficial to enhancing biodiversity within a native woodland setting by increasing Bur Oak growth, enhancing the understory, and removing leaf litter.

23. Goose Depredation

[Info Item: Wildlife]

Jacob Lorton, Wildlife Damage Specialist in Webster, provided an overview of the Wildlife Damage Management Program for Canada Goose. The discussion covered the funding source for the program with the current three-year population average. Day County was highlighted as a hot spot for Canada goose depredation. A toolbox was outlined for methods used to prevent damage to standing crops which included: hunting seasons, hazing devices, buffer strips, fencing, feeding sites, nest work, and kill permits. The presentation concluded with a spotlight on the internships associated with Canada goose depredation.



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24. Big Sioux River CREP/Riparian Buffer Initiative

[Info Item: Wildlife]

The Big Sioux CREP and Riparian Buffer Initiative strengthen South Dakota watersheds by reducing nutrient and sediment runoff while improving the resilience of riparian areas. Through flexible, landowner-driven conservation programs, producers can enroll priority acres to improve habitat, expand public access, and address challenges such as erosion, depredation, and operational inefficiencies. By leveraging partnerships and strategically stacking programs, these initiatives deliver practical, landscape-level conservation solutions that improve water quality, support wildlife, and help sustain productive agricultural operations.

25. Coyote Bounty Results

[Info Item: Wildlife]

Jacquie Ermer, Regional Wildlife Supervisor, reported on the results from the 2026 Coyote Bounty Program. The program was for all South Dakota residents starting on April 1. The maximum of \$300,000 was not reached prior to the end date thus the program ended on July 1. A total of 4,097 coyote tails were submitted at \$30/tail for a total payout of \$122,910. Of the 573 total participants, 23% were youth under the age of 18. The top three counties for submissions were Brown, Beadle, and McPherson counties.

26. Plant Identification and Management Workshop

[Info Item: Wildlife]

Owen McElroy, GFP Public Lands Habitat Team Region 4 and Joe Blastick with The Nature Conservancy, shared information on plant tours they have been helping with for 10 years. The goal of these tours is to show folks that there is more to a grassland than just grass and even though some plants may look like weeds they are not and are beneficial for cattle and wildlife. They also talked about their partnerships and work they are doing with other agencies to promote healthy grasslands.

27. Law Enforcement Case Highlight

[Info Item: Wildlife]

District Conservation Officer Supervisor Joe Galbraith gave a case highlight from a recent TIP's case. Case had multiple suspects from Edmunds County. Officers served 5 search warrants on the suspects. 13 firearms were confiscated during the search of the home. The five suspects were found guilty and paid fines and civil damages. 6 guns were forfeited to the state, along with an iPad and thermal mounting unit.

28. License Sales Report

[Info Item: Wildlife]

Director Kirschenmann provided a report on licenses sales for the month of June. Of interest discussed was fishing licenses and that fact that all three resident license types are behind last year and the three-year average. Kirschenmann also pointed out the high interest for big game licenses as results from the first draw of the combined deer draw showed that there were about 6,000 more applications in 2026 than 2025.

25. Adjourn

[Action Item]

A Regular Commission Meeting will be held on September 10-11 at The Holiday Inn Express, in Winner, SD starting at 1 pm CST.

MOTIONED BY CULL, SECONDED BY NYBERG TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 10:04 AM CST ON JULY 10, 2026. Motion carried unanimously.

Submitted respectfully,

Kevin Robling, Department Secretary

SOUTH DAKOTA GAME, FISH & PARKS

523 East Capital

Pierre, SD 57501

Chris.Petersen@state.sd.us

(605)773-3396

**REQUEST FOR LISTS OF LICENSE HOLDERS**Type of List Requested Non-Resident Pheasant HuntersNumber of Licenses in list 4000

Name of Person, Entity, or Organization requesting list:

Highpoint Hunting Lodge / Highpoint lodge

Address of Person, Entity, or Organization:

20940 296th Ave Pierre, SD 57501

Purpose for which list will be used:

Advertising* 2000 names from Texas * 1000 names from Oklahoma* 1000 names from Alabama

The sale of lists by the Department of Game, Fish & Parks is authorized by SDCL 1-17-1 and ARSD 41:06:01:04, 05 and 06. A fee of \$100 per thousand names will be assessed for the sale of this list, or a minimum of \$100 whichever is greater.

Names will be provided on self-adhesive mailing labels unless otherwise specified. Unless requested and approved as part of this request, the license list will not include anyone under eighteen years of age. Names are for one-time use only and are to be used only by the person, entity or organization approved per this request.

Paul David
Authorized Signature of Purchaser

8/31/26
Date

Date of Commission Action

GAME, FISH AND PARKS COMMISSION ACTION FINALIZATION

AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES

Chapter 41:10:04

Commission Meeting Dates:	Proposal	July 9, 2026	Webster
	Public Hearing	Sept. 10, 2026	Winner
	Finalization	Sept. 10-11, 2026	Winner

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION

Proposed changes:

1. Add golden mussel to the current list of Aquatic Invasive Species.
2. Modify a current exemption to exclude phragmites species from being used as blind material on a conveyance when launching or removing from a waterbody.

Department recommended changes to proposal:

None

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

1. Golden mussels have established self-sustaining populations in western North America and are spreading east. Golden mussels can have similar impacts to zebra and quagga mussels once established.
2. Both native and invasive common reed (phragmites spp.) exist in South Dakota and determining the difference is challenging. By excluding both in this exemption, it will prevent users from inadvertently using the invasive form as blind material and possibly contributing to the spread of this species within the state.

DRAFT ADMINISTRATIVE RULE CHANGES

The following are proposed draft changes that are intended to incorporate the changes recommended for Commission proposal.

41:10:04:01. List of aquatic invasive species. Species classified as aquatic invasive species in the state are as follows;

- (1) Fish:
 - (a) Bighead carp, *Hypophthalmichthys nobilis*;
 - (b) Black carp, *Mylopharyngodon piceus*;
 - (c) Common carp, *Cyprinus carpio*;
 - (d) Grass carp, *Ctenopharyngodon idella*;
 - (e) Prussian carp, *Carassius gibelio*;
 - (f) Round goby, *Neogobius melanostomus*;
 - (g) Rudd, *Scardinius erythrophthalmus*;
 - (h) Silver carp, *Hypophthalmichthys molitrix*;
 - (i) Snakehead (*Channa* Spp.);
 - (j) Western mosquitofish, *Gambusia affinis*; and
 - (k) White perch, *Morone americana*;
- (2) Plants:
 - (a) Brittle naiad, *Najas minor*;
 - (b) Common reed, *Phragmites australis*;

APPROVE _____	MODIFY _____	REJECT _____	NO ACTION _____
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- (c) Curly pondweed, *Potamogeton crispus*;
- (d) Didymo, *Didymosphenia geminata*;
- (e) Eurasian water-milfoil, *Myriophyllum spicatum*;
- (f) Flowering rush, *Butomus umbellatus*;
- (g) Purple loosestrife, *Lythrum salicaria*; and
- (h) Starry stonewort, *Nitellopsis obtusa*; and

(3) Invertebrates:

- (a) Asian clam, *Corbicula fluminea*;
- (b) New Zealand mudsnail, *Potamopyrgus antipodarum*;
- (c) Quagga mussel, *Dreissena rostriformis bugensis*;
- (d) Red rimmed melania, *Melanoides tuberculata*;
- (e) Red swamp crayfish, *Procambarus clarkii*;
- (f) Rusty crayfish, *Orconectes rusticus*;
- (g) Spiny waterflea, *Bythotrephes longimanus*; ~~and~~
- (h) Zebra mussel, *Dreissena polymorpha*; and
- (i) Golden mussel, *Limnoperna fortunei*.

41:10:04:02.01. Aquatic species conveyance launching and removal exceptions. The following are exempt from SDCL [41-13A-3](#) and [41-13A-4](#):

- (1) An owner and agent of the owner of a conveyance with dressinid mussels attached that is subsequently launched directly into the infested water from which it was removed, if the conveyance was stored on the riparian property of the owner or at a marina business property on the infested water, prior to launch; and
- (2) An owner and agent of the owner of a conveyance with a shooting or observational blind constructed of aquatic macrophytes, except common reed (*Phragmites* spp.), cut above the water line, attached to or in the conveyance.

RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT CRITERIA

- 1. The Issue – NA
- 2. Historical Considerations – NA
- 3. Biological Considerations – Efforts to slow the spread of new and current Aquatic Invasive Species in South Dakota.
- 4. Social Considerations – NA
- 5. Financial considerations – NA

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, REACTIVATION (R3) CRITERIA

- 1. Does the regulation or fee inhibit a user's ability to participate? NA
- 2. Does the regulation increase the opportunity for new and existing users? NA
- 3. How does the regulation impact the next generation of hunters, anglers, trappers and outdoor recreationists? NA
- 4. Does the regulation enhance the quality of life for current and future generations by getting families outdoors? NA

FISCAL IMPACT

No anticipated fiscal impact to the Department.

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

BAIT

Chapter 41:09:04

Commission Meeting Dates:	Proposal	July 9, 2026	Webster
	Public Hearing	Sept. 10, 2026	Winner
	Finalization	Sept. 10-11, 2026	Winner

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION

Proposed changes:

1. Modify the reporting requirements for resident retail bait dealers by removing the annual summary of bait harvested.

Department recommended changes to proposal:

None

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

1. Of the approximately 150 retail bait dealers licensed annually in South Dakota, only two or three trap their own bait and removing the requirement to submit an annual summary of bait harvested greatly simplifies the license issuing process.
2. Retail bait dealers who trap their own bait would still need to follow requirements of **41:09:04:16.01. Records required for bait taken in South Dakota waters**, and maintain daily records of bait trapped.

DRAFT ADMINISTRATIVE RULE CHANGES

The following are proposed draft changes that are intended to incorporate the changes recommended for Commission proposal.

41:09:04:16. Records required. All records required in §§ 41:09:04:16.01 through to 41:09:04:16.06, inclusive, must be recorded and maintained on forms supplied by the department ~~Department of Game, Fish and Parks~~, or electronically in a format approved by the department.

Each record must be kept current and available for inspection by personnel of the department, during normal business hours, at the physical location of the business ~~where the record is kept~~, as indicated on the license application, for a period of three years after the end of the license year. ~~Each record for a resident bait dealer must be kept within the state.~~ Each wholesale and export bait dealer shall submit a summary of the dealer's yearly records to the department by January ~~31~~ thirty-first of the following calendar year. The department may refuse to issue a new license if ~~these records are the~~ summary is not submitted.

RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT CRITERIA

1. The Issue – NA
2. Historical Considerations – NA
3. Biological Considerations – NA
4. Social Considerations – NA
5. Financial considerations – NA

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, REACTIVATION (R3) CRITERIA

APPROVE _____	MODIFY _____	REJECT _____	NO ACTION _____
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1. Does the regulation or fee inhibit a user's ability to participate? NA
2. Does the regulation increase the opportunity for new and existing users? NA
3. How does the regulation impact the next generation of hunters, anglers, trappers and outdoor recreationists? NA
4. Does the regulation enhance the quality of life for current and future generations by getting families outdoors? NA

FISCAL IMPACT

No anticipated fiscal impact to the Department.

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

FISH LIMITS Chapter 41:07:03

Commission Meeting Dates:	Proposal	July 9, 2026	Webster
	Public Hearing	Sept. 10, 2026	Winner
	Finalization	Sept. 10-11, 2026	Winner

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION

Proposed changes:

1. Modify the daily and possession limit of muskellunge and northern-muskellunge (tiger) cross from catch and release to 1 daily, 2 in possession with a 45-inch minimum length limit for inland waters.
2. Modify the current daily harvest limits for Reetz Lake in Day County to statewide limits for inland waters.

Department recommended changes to proposal:

None

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

1. Currently, the harvest limit for muskellunge and northern-muskellunge (tiger) cross is catch and release only. This change would allow for the harvest of 1 fish daily, 2 in possession with a 45-inch minimum length limit on inland waters, which would allow for the opportunity of limited harvest while still providing a trophy fishery.
2. Currently, the daily harvest limits for Reetz Lake in Day County are: one walleye twenty-eight inches or greater in length; one yellow perch fourteen inches or greater in length; one black crappie fifteen inches or greater in length; and one bluegill ten inches or greater in length, from May first through September thirtieth. This unique regulation was implemented when an access agreement was in place to allow public access. This agreement is no longer active, and public access is by landowner permission only.

DRAFT ADMINISTRATIVE RULE CHANGES

The following are proposed draft changes that are intended to incorporate the changes recommended for Commission proposal.

41:07:03:01. Inland waters. Except as provided in § 41:07:03:03, ~~in inland waters~~ no person may harvest in one day or ~~have in possession~~ possess at any one time ~~more than~~ the following fish taken from inland waters:

- (1) ~~Five trout~~ Trout or salmon of any species combined, daily limit five, possession limit ten;
- (2) ~~Four walleye~~ Walleye of any species combined, daily limit four, possession limit eight;
- (3) ~~Five largemouth~~ Largemouth bass or smallmouth bass or combination thereof, daily limit five, possession limit ten;
- (4) ~~Ten catfish~~ Catfish of any species combined, daily limit ten, possession limit ~~20~~ twenty, provided that no more than one flathead catfish may be over ~~30~~ thirty inches in length;
- (5) ~~Six northern~~ Northern pike, daily limit six, possession limit ~~12~~ twelve;
- (6) ~~Fifteen, bluegill and~~ Bluegill or sunfish or combination thereof, daily limit fifteen, possession limit ~~30~~ thirty each;

APPROVE _____	MODIFY _____	REJECT _____	NO ACTION _____
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- (7) ~~Fifteen crappie~~ Crappie of any species combined, daily limit fifteen, possession limit ~~30~~ thirty;
- (8) ~~Fifteen yellow~~ Yellow perch, daily limit fifteen, possession limit ~~30~~ thirty;
- (9) ~~The daily limit for smelt is~~ Smelt, daily limit five gallons, no possession limit; and
- (10) ~~Unlimited number of rough fish, lake herring, lake whitefish, white bass, rock bass, and bullheads; and~~
- (11) ~~The season for all species of sturgeon is closed.~~
- One muskellunge or northern pike-muskellunge hybrid, forty-five inches or longer, possession limit two.
- The season for all species of sturgeon is closed. The season on paddlefish is closed, except as provided in § 41:07:05:02.

41:07:03:03. Daily, possession, and length limit restrictions on special management waters--
Additional restrictions described Exceptions to Harvest Restrictions for inland waters.

Daily limit, possession limit, length limit, and additional restrictions on special management inland waters are as follows:

- (1) Catfish may be ~~taken~~ harvested without limit on the Grand, Moreau, Cheyenne, Belle Fourche, Bad, White, and Little Missouri Rivers; and in the inland waters of the Missouri River and its impoundments;
- (2) In the waters of Lake Yankton in Yankton County and Lake Mitchell in Davison County, the minimum length ~~limit for to harvest~~ largemouth and smallmouth bass is fifteen inches;
- (3) In New Wall Dam in Pennington County, only those largemouth and smallmouth bass less than fourteen inches in length or eighteen inches or greater in length may be ~~taken~~ harvested, and of the largemouth and smallmouth bass ~~taken~~ harvested daily no more than one may be eighteen inches or greater in length;
- (4) In the Black Hills Fish Management Area:
- (a) The areas described in subsections (b), (c), and (d) are restricted to artificial lures only ~~and the use or possession of worms, baitfish, salmon eggs, corn, marshmallows, insects, moldable scented bait or naturally occurring or man-made food intended to be used as bait, within one hundred feet of the water in those areas, is prohibited;~~
- (b) Rapid Creek, ~~including the Pactola Stilling Basin from below Pactola Dam to the foot bridge at Placerville Camp, including the Pactola Stilling Basin and Upper and Lower Yates Ponds at Cheyenne Crossing, are restricted to catch and release;~~
- (c) Rapid Creek in Rapid City from Jackson Boulevard upstream to Park Drive is restricted to catch and release;
- (d) Spearfish Creek from Homestake Hydro Dam No. 2 to Maurice Dam is restricted to catch and release for rainbow trout. ~~Other trout species may be retained within established limits, and Upper and Lower Yates Ponds at Cheyenne Crossing are restricted to catch and release for all trout species; and~~
- (e) Only one trout fourteen inches or greater in length, regardless of species, may be taken harvested daily from streams ~~within the Black Hills Fish Management Area. However, in the Black Hills Fish Management Area, except the minimum length limit for to harvest lake trout or brook trout-lake trout hybrid is twenty-four inches or greater and the combined daily limit is one;~~
- (5) ~~All waters statewide are restricted to catch and release only for muskellunge and northern muskellunge (tiger) cross;~~
- (6) ~~The season on paddlefish is closed, except as provided in § 41:07:05:02;~~
- (7)(6) In inland waters, only one walleye twenty inches or greater in length may be ~~taken~~ harvested daily, except as provided in ~~subdivisions (10) and (13) of this section~~ subdivision (9);
- (8)(7) In Lakes Francis Case and Sharpe, the minimum length limit for walleye is fifteen inches, from September first through June thirtieth;
- (9)(8) In Angostura Reservoir, Shadehill Reservoir, and from the ~~Ft. Fort~~ Randall Dam downstream to the South Dakota-Nebraska state line on the Missouri River, the minimum length limit for walleye is fifteen inches;
- (10)(9) In Twin Lakes in Minnehaha County and Horseshoe Lake in Day County, the daily limit for walleye of any species is one, with a minimum length of twenty-eight inches ~~or greater in length;~~
- (11)(10) In Lynn and Middle Lynn Lakes in Day County; Opitz Lake in Day and Marshall Counties; Newell Lake and Belle Fourche Reservoir, including the terminal drop canal, in Butte

County; and Curlew Lake in Meade County, the daily limit for walleye of any species combined is two and the minimum length limit is fifteen inches; and

~~(12)~~(11) From the ~~Ft.~~ Fort Randall Dam downstream to the South Dakota-Nebraska state line on the Missouri River, the daily limit for white bass is fifteen and the possession limit is thirty; and

~~(13) In Reetz Lake in Day County, the daily limit is: one walleye twenty eight inches or greater in length; one yellow perch fourteen inches or greater in length; one black crappie fifteen inches or greater in length; and one bluegill ten inches or greater in length, from May first through September thirtieth.~~

RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT CRITERIA

1. The Issue – NA
2. Historical Considerations – NA
3. Biological Considerations – Low levels of harvest will have negligible biological impacts.
4. Social Considerations – NA
5. Financial considerations – NA

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, REACTIVATION (R3) CRITERIA

1. Does the regulation or fee inhibit a user's ability to participate? NA
2. Does the regulation increase the opportunity for new and existing users? NA
3. How does the regulation impact the next generation of hunters, anglers, trappers and outdoor recreationists? NA
4. Does the regulation enhance the quality of life for current and future generations by getting families outdoors? NA

FISCAL IMPACT

No anticipated fiscal impact to the Department.

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

IMPORTATION OF FISH

Chapter 41:09:08

Commission Meeting Dates:	Proposal	July 9, 2026	Webster
	Public Hearing	Sept. 10, 2026	Winner
	Finalization	Sept. 10-11, 2026	Winner

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION

Proposed changes:

1. Update the list of fish pathogens of regulatory concern used for fish importation permit requirements.

Department recommended changes to proposal:

None

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

1. Updating the list of pathogens of regulatory concern is directly related to issuance of fish importation permits. For an importation permit to be granted for a specific species of fish, the out-of-state supplier must have had a fish health inspection for their facility within the last year, the species of interest must have been tested for species-specific pathogens of concern, and those test results must be negative. This change would reduce the regulatory burden on importers and suppliers by reducing the number of pathogens that must be tested for. The proposed changes reflect current fish health standards and disease risk assessments while maintaining safeguards to prevent the introduction of significant fish pathogens into South Dakota waters.

DRAFT ADMINISTRATIVE RULE CHANGES

The following are proposed draft changes that are intended to incorporate the changes recommended for Commission proposal.

41:09:08:03.03. Pathogens of regulatory concern. ~~Fish pathogens of regulatory concern are as follows~~ Screening, in accordance with § 41:09:08:03.04, is required for the following fish pathogens before the department may issue a fish importation permit:

(1) For all fish species:

- ~~(a) Viral, viral hemorrhagic septicemia virus—₁ V.H.S.; and~~
~~(b) Yersinia ruckeri—enteric redmouth disease.~~

~~In addition, screening for the following pathogens is required for the following fish families:~~

(2) Salmonidae:

- (a) Oncorhynchus masou virus—₁ O.M.V.;
(b) Salmonid rickettsial septicemia virus—₁ S.R.S.;
(c) Infectious salmon anemia virus—₁ I.S.A.;
(d) Infectious pancreatic necrosis virus—₁ I.P.N.;
(e) Infectious hematopoietic necrosis virus—₁ I.H.N.;
(f) Epizootic epitheliotropic disease virus—₁ E.E.D.;
(g) Spring viremia of carp virus—₁ S.V.C.;
(h) Renibacterium salmoninarum—₁ bacterial kidney disease;
(i) Aeromonas salmonicida—₁ furunculosis;
(j) ~~Piscirickettsia salmonis—piscirickettsiosis~~ Yersinia ruckeri, enteric redmouth

disease;

- (k) Ceratomyxa shasta—₁ ceratomyxosis; and

APPROVE _____	MODIFY _____	REJECT _____	NO ACTION _____
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- (l) ~~Tetracapsuloides bryosalmonae~~—proliferative kidney disease; and
- (m) ~~Myxosoma cerebralis~~—whirling disease;
- (3) ~~Ictaluridae~~:
 - (a) ~~Channel catfish virus~~—C.C.V.;
 - (b) ~~Edwardsiella ictaluri~~—catfish enteric septicemia;
 - (c) ~~Edwardsiella tarda~~—emphysematous putrefactive disease; and
 - (d) ~~Edwardsiella piscicida~~;
- (4) ~~Percidae~~:
 - (a) ~~Heterosporis~~ sp.;
- (5) ~~Cyprinidae~~:
 - (a) ~~Spring viremia of carp virus~~—S.V.C.; and
 - (b) ~~Edwardsiella piscicida~~;
- (6) ~~Esocidae~~:
 - (a) ~~Spring viremia of carp virus~~—S.V.C.; and
 - (b) ~~Northern pike fry rhabdovirus~~—P.F.R.D.;
- (7) ~~Centrarchidae~~:
 - (a) ~~Spring viremia of carp virus~~—S.V.C.;
 - (b) ~~Largemouth bass virus~~—L.M.B.V.; and
 - (c) ~~Edwardsiella piscicida~~;
- (8) ~~Acipenseridae~~:
 - (a) ~~White sturgeon iridovirus~~—W.S.I.; and
 - (b) ~~Shovelnose sturgeon iridovirus~~—S.S.I.; and
- (9)(4) ~~Polyodontidae~~
 - (a) ~~Shovelnose, shovelnose~~ sturgeon iridovirus—S.S.I.

RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT CRITERIA

1. The Issue – NA
2. Historical Considerations – NA
3. Biological Considerations – NA.
4. Social Considerations – NA
5. Financial considerations – NA

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, REACTIVATION (R3) CRITERIA

1. Does the regulation or fee inhibit a user's ability to participate? NA
2. Does the regulation increase the opportunity for new and existing users? NA
3. How does the regulation impact the next generation of hunters, anglers, trappers and outdoor recreationists? NA
4. Does the regulation enhance the quality of life for current and future generations by getting families outdoors? NA

FISCAL IMPACT

No anticipated fiscal impact to the Department.

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

PADDLEFISH SEASON

Chapter 41:07:05

Commission Meeting Dates:	Proposal	July 9, 2026	Webster
	Public Hearing	Sept. 10, 2026	Winner
	Finalization	Sept. 10-11, 2026	Winner

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION

Proposed changes:

1. Modify the transportation requirements for paddlefish harvested during the archery season below Gavins Point Dam to allow for harvested paddlefish to be cleaned, including removal of the head, skin and tail, prior to transport.

Department recommended changes to proposal:

None

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

1. The justification for the cleaning restrictions is for law enforcement to be able to accurately determine the length of a harvested paddlefish when encountered. As there is no length limit or protected slot for the archery season, requiring the head, skin and tail of a paddlefish to be attached for inspection is not needed.

DRAFT ADMINISTRATIVE RULE CHANGES

The following are proposed draft changes that are intended to incorporate the changes recommended for Commission proposal.

41:07:05:03. Paddlefish snagging, processing, and transportation restrictions. Any paddlefish ~~taken~~ harvested below Gavin's Point Dam, by snagging, and which measures between ~~35~~ thirty-five inches and ~~45~~ forty-five inches when measured with a flexible tape along and over the center line contour of the fish, lying flat, from an entire eye to the natural unaltered fork of the tail, must be immediately released to the water from which it was caught. A person may not attempt to snag rough fish or paddlefish after reaching the limit on paddlefish. ~~A gaff hook or other penetrating device may not be used as an aid while landing snagged paddlefish.~~

For paddlefish ~~taken~~ harvested below Gavin's Point Dam by snagging, only the snout in front of the eyes, gills, and entrails of a paddlefish may be removed for transportation. The head, skin, and tail must remain attached. Final processing may only be completed once the angler has reached ~~their~~ the angler's domicile or immediately prior to consumption.

RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT CRITERIA

1. The Issue – NA
2. Historical Considerations – NA
3. Biological Considerations – NA
4. Social Considerations – NA
5. Financial considerations – NA

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, REACTIVATION (R3) CRITERIA

APPROVE _____	MODIFY _____	REJECT _____	NO ACTION _____
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1. Does the regulation or fee inhibit a user's ability to participate? NA
2. Does the regulation increase the opportunity for new and existing users? NA
3. How does the regulation impact the next generation of hunters, anglers, trappers and outdoor recreationists? NA
4. Does the regulation enhance the quality of life for current and future generations by getting families outdoors? NA

FISCAL IMPACT

No anticipated fiscal impact to the Department.

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

Endangered and Threatened Species Chapter 41:10:02

Commission Meeting Dates:	Proposal	July 9-10, 2026	Webster
	Public Hearing	September 10, 2026	Winner
	Finalization	September 10-11, 2026	Winner

COMMISSION PROPOSAL

Duration: Beginning in 2026

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

- 1) Modify § 41:10:02:01 to remove the Eskimo curlew and least tern from the list of endangered birds.

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

South Dakota Codified Laws § 34A-8-3 and § 34A-8-4 direct the GFP Commission to maintain a state list of endangered and threatened species and to review that list every two years, making any necessary additions or deletions. In addition, § 34A-8-5 requires the Commission to promulgate rules governing the addition or removal of species and to notify the governors of bordering states where the affected species is known to occur.

GFP staff recommend delisting two species currently classified as state endangered: the Eskimo curlew and the Least tern.

- The Eskimo curlew is believed to be extinct throughout its range. The last confirmed observation occurred in Barbados in 1963, and there are no records of the species in the South Dakota Nongame Conservation Database.
- The least tern was removed from the Federal List of Threatened and Endangered Species in 2021. In South Dakota, least terns have been monitored annually for more than 30 years, and recovery criteria have been met for multiple consecutive years, including the most recent monitoring period in 2025.

These findings support the recommendation to remove both species from the state endangered list.

DRAFT ADMINISTRATIVE RULE CHANGES

41:10:02:01. List of endangered birds. Birds classified as endangered in the state are as follows

- (1) Whooping crane, *Grus americana*;
- ~~— (2) Eskimo curlew, *Numenius borealis*;~~
- ~~— (3) Least Tern, *Sternula antillarum*.~~

RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT CRITERIA

None.

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, REACTIVATION (R3) CRITERIA

None.

FISCAL IMPACT

None.

APPROVE _____ MODIFY _____ REJECT _____ NO ACTION _____



2026 July Camping

Agenda Item #15

7/1/2025 - 7/31/2025	7/1/2026 - 7/31/2026
Camping Units	Camping Units
78080	74371

District	Facility Name	Camping Units	Camping Units	%
1	Fort Sisseton State Park	246	196	-20%
	Pickereel Lake Recreation Area	1374	1285	-6%
	Roy Lake State Park	2144	2282	6%
	Sica Hollow State Park	50	55	10%
	Amsden Dam Lakeside Use Area	46	64	39%
2	Fisher Grove State Park	264	246	-7%
	Lake Louise Recreation Area	486	517	6%
	Mina Lake Recreation Area	710	686	-3%
	Richmond Lake Recreation Area	423	347	-18%
	Hartford Beach State Park	1473	1452	-1%
3	Lake Cochrane Recreation Area	670	644	-4%
	Pelican Lake Recreation Area	1418	1388	-2%
	Sandy Shore Recreation Area	517	479	-7%
4	Lake Poinsett Recreation Area	1913	1853	-3%
	Oakwood Lakes State Park	2091	2096	0%
	Lake Carthage Lakeside Use Area	187	144	-23%
5	Lake Herman State Park	1144	1279	12%
	Lake Thompson Recreation Area	1688	1520	-10%
	Walkers Point Recreation Area	586	591	1%
	Burke Lake Recreation Area	5	5	0%
	Buryanek Recreation Area	627	654	4%
6	Dude Ranch Lakeside Use Area	5	16	220%
	Elm Creek Lakeside Use Area	0	0	NA
	Platte Creek Recreation Area	287	254	-11%
	Snake Creek Recreation Area	1640	1442	-12%
	Big Sioux State Recreation Area	1230	1154	-6%
7	Lake Vermillion Recreation Area	2294	2197	-4%
	Palisades State Park	2037	2162	6%
	Twin Lake Lakeside Use Area	0	12	NA
8	Newton Hills State Park	1955	1931	-1%
	Union Grove State Park	195	226	16%
	Chief White Crane Recreation Area	2543	2563	1%
9	Clay County Park	338	317	-6%
	Lewis and Clark Recreation Area	9919	9654	-3%
	Pierson Ranch Recreation Area	1090	1070	-2%
	Sand Creek Lakeside Use Area	27	1	-96%
	Springfield Recreation Area	257	255	-1%
10	Tabor Lakeside Use Area	4	13	225%
	North Point Recreation Area	2826	2651	-6%
	North Wheeler Recreation Area	232	186	-20%
	Pease Creek Recreation Area	368	287	-22%
	Randall Creek Recreation Area	1533	1381	-10%
11	South Shore Lakeside Use Area	105	98	-7%
	Star Valley Lakeside Use Area	8	6	-25%
	Whetstone Bay Lakeside Use Area	77	44	-43%
	White Swan Lakeside Use Area	36	54	50%
	Farm Island Recreation Area	1741	1538	-12%
12	West Bend Recreation Area	1589	1284	-19%
	Cow Creek Recreation Area	902	812	-10%
	Oahe Downstream Recreation Area	3054	2636	-14%
	Okobojo Point Recreation Area	355	321	-10%
	Spring Creek Recreation Area	280	329	18%
13	East Whitlock Lakeside Use Area	12	25	108%
	Indian Creek Recreation Area	1811	1420	-22%
	Lake Hiddenwood Recreation Area	47	76	62%
	Little Bend Lakeside Use Area	4	5	25%
	Swan Creek Recreation Area	240	184	-23%
14	Walth Bay Lakeside Use Area	15	17	13%
	West Pollock Recreation Area	234	206	-12%
	West Whitlock Recreation Area	1257	1032	-18%
	Bear Butte State Park	252	93	-63%
	Hugh Glass Lakeside Use Area	79	117	48%
15	Llewellyn Johns Recreation Area	75	36	-52%
	Rocky Point Recreation Area	1471	1442	-2%
	Shadehill Recreation Area	1667	1509	-9%
16	Custer State Park	11268	11279	0%
	Angostura Recreation Area	4086	3786	-7%
	Bailey's Lakeside Use Area	17	0	-100%
17	Sheps Canyon Recreation Area	612	467	-24%
	Total:	78080	74371	-5%



2026 August Camping

8/1/2025 - 8/31/2025	8/1/2026 - 8/31/2026
Camping Units	Camping Units
66745	53597

District	Facility Name	Camping Units	Camping Units	%
1	Fort Sisseton State Park	180	118	-34%
	Pickereel Lake Recreation Area	1041	789	-24%
	Roy Lake State Park	1772	1477	-17%
	Sica Hollow State Park	46	48	4%
	Amsden Dam Lakeside Use Area	43	23	-47%
2	Fisher Grove State Park	202	192	-5%
	Lake Louise Recreation Area	478	331	-31%
	Mina Lake Recreation Area	683	608	-11%
	Richmond Lake Recreation Area	370	286	-23%
	Hartford Beach State Park	1417	1062	-25%
3	Lake Cochrane Recreation Area	457	390	-15%
	Pelican Lake Recreation Area	1173	1038	-12%
	Sandy Shore Recreation Area	352	329	-7%
	Lake Poinsett Recreation Area	1466	1248	-15%
	Oakwood Lakes State Park	1929	1409	-27%
4	Lake Carthage Lakeside Use Area	177	154	-13%
	Lake Herman State Park	1372	1216	-11%
	Lake Thompson Recreation Area	1460	978	-33%
	Walkers Point Recreation Area	552	549	-1%
	Burke Lake Recreation Area	0	2	NA
5	Buryanek Recreation Area	412	402	-2%
	Dude Ranch Lakeside Use Area	22	1	-95%
	Platte Creek Recreation Area	152	116	-24%
	Snake Creek Recreation Area	1364	997	-27%
	Big Sioux State Recreation Area	1161	1113	-4%
6	Lake Vermillion Recreation Area	2253	1882	-16%
	Palisades State Park	1955	1831	-6%
	Good Earth State Park	0	1	NA
	Newton Hills State Park	1889	1358	-28%
	Union Grove State Park	223	157	-30%
7	Chief White Crane Recreation Area	2318	1742	-25%
	Clay County Park	326	217	-33%
	Lewis and Clark Recreation Area	8666	7082	-18%
	Pierson Ranch Recreation Area	905	650	-28%
	Sand Creek Lakeside Use Area	7	4	-43%
8	Springfield Recreation Area	218	129	-41%
	Tabor Lakeside Use Area	5	0	-100%
	North Point Recreation Area	1921	1593	-17%
	North Wheeler Recreation Area	131	100	-24%
	Pease Creek Recreation Area	351	228	-35%
9	Randall Creek Recreation Area	1013	568	-44%
	South Shore Lakeside Use Area	55	36	-35%
	Star Valley Lakeside Use Area	0	8	NA
	Whetstone Bay Lakeside Use Area	33	32	-3%
	White Swan Lakeside Use Area	20	25	25%
10	Farm Island Recreation Area	1278	1001	-22%
	West Bend Recreation Area	965	514	-47%
	Cow Creek Recreation Area	536	484	-10%
	Minneconju Lakeside Use Area	0	4	NA
	Oahe Downstream Recreation Area	2530	1890	-25%
11	Okobojo Point Recreation Area	198	107	-46%
	Spring Creek Recreation Area	216	120	-44%
	East Whitlock Lakeside Use Area	6	4	-33%
	Indian Creek Recreation Area	1284	744	-42%
	Lake Hiddenwood Recreation Area	37	40	8%
12	Little Bend Lakeside Use Area	0	13	NA
	Swan Creek Recreation Area	150	80	-47%
	Walth Bay Lakeside Use Area	2	3	50%
	West Pollock Recreation Area	153	66	-57%
	West Whitlock Recreation Area	684	357	-48%
13	Bear Butte State Park	401	231	-42%
	Hugh Glass Lakeside Use Area	56	41	-27%
	Llewellyn Johns Recreation Area	128	23	-82%
	Rocky Point Recreation Area	1317	1109	-16%
	Shadehill Recreation Area	1314	859	-35%
14	Custer State Park	10951	10498	-4%
	Angostura Recreation Area	3490	2695	-23%
	Bailey's Lakeside Use Area	9	5	-44%
	Sheps Canyon Recreation Area	470	190	-60%
	Total:	66745	53597	-20%



2026 August YTD Camping

1/1/2025 - 8/31/2025	1/1/2026 - 8/31/2026
Camping Units	Camping Units
278570	257522

District	Facility Name	Camping Units	Camping Units	%
1	Fort Sisseton State Park	1318	1023	-22%
	Pickereel Lake Recreation Area	4491	4035	-10%
	Roy Lake State Park	7109	6522	-8%
	Sica Hollow State Park	170	193	14%
	Amsden Dam Lakeside Use Area	209	219	5%
2	Fisher Grove State Park	799	793	-1%
	Lake Louise Recreation Area	1851	1561	-16%
	Mina Lake Recreation Area	2697	2666	-1%
	Richmond Lake Recreation Area	1449	1384	-4%
	Hartford Beach State Park	5452	4875	-11%
3	Lake Cochran Recreation Area	1792	1640	-8%
	Pelican Lake Recreation Area	5172	4864	-6%
	Sandy Shore Recreation Area	1454	1365	-6%
4	Lake Poinsett Recreation Area	6323	5779	-9%
	Oakwood Lakes State Park	7428	6689	-10%
5	Lake Carthage Lakeside Use Area	641	620	-3%
	Lake Herman State Park	4706	4854	3%
	Lake Thompson Recreation Area	5904	5093	-14%
	Walkers Point Recreation Area	2205	2028	-8%
	Burke Lake Recreation Area	31	31	0%
6	Buryanek Recreation Area	2290	2243	-2%
	Dude Ranch Lakeside Use Area	126	213	69%
	Elm Creek Lakeside Use Area	75	72	-4%
	Platte Creek Recreation Area	1219	962	-21%
	Snake Creek Recreation Area	6198	5582	-10%
7	Big Sioux State Recreation Area	5154	5110	-1%
	Lake Vermillion Recreation Area	8935	8391	-6%
	Palisades State Park	7971	8187	3%
	Twin Lake Lakeside Use Area	15	13	-13%
	Good Earth State Park	0	2	NA
8	Newton Hills State Park	7436	6724	-10%
	Union Grove State Park	969	821	-15%
	Chief White Crane Recreation Area	9351	8495	-9%
	Clay County Park	1372	1222	-11%
	Lewis and Clark Recreation Area	33197	31558	-5%
9	Pierson Ranch Recreation Area	3787	3346	-12%
	Sand Creek Lakeside Use Area	125	56	-55%
	Springfield Recreation Area	1028	916	-11%
	Tabor Lakeside Use Area	42	44	5%
	North Point Recreation Area	8525	7642	-10%
10	North Wheeler Recreation Area	891	777	-13%
	Pease Creek Recreation Area	1488	1249	-16%
	Randall Creek Recreation Area	4775	3970	-17%
	South Shore Lakeside Use Area	252	265	5%
	Star Valley Lakeside Use Area	19	47	147%
11	Whetstone Bay Lakeside Use Area	372	335	-10%
	White Swan Lakeside Use Area	134	179	34%
	Farm Island Recreation Area	5788	5375	-7%
	West Bend Recreation Area	6028	5570	-8%
	Cow Creek Recreation Area	2686	2409	-10%
12	Minneconju Lakeside Use Area	0	29	NA
	Oahe Downstream Recreation Area	11129	9730	-13%
	Okobojo Point Recreation Area	1135	985	-13%
	Spring Creek Recreation Area	897	792	-12%
	East Whitlock Lakeside Use Area	39	83	113%
13	Indian Creek Recreation Area	6725	5899	-12%
	Lake Hiddenwood Recreation Area	168	190	13%
	Little Bend Lakeside Use Area	6	23	283%
	Little Moreau Recreation Area	0	11	NA
	Swan Creek Recreation Area	956	880	-8%
14	Walth Bay Lakeside Use Area	25	49	96%
	West Pollock Recreation Area	1048	868	-17%
	West Whitlock Recreation Area	4301	3624	-16%
	Bear Butte State Park	985	542	-45%
	Hugh Glass Lakeside Use Area	229	268	17%
15	Llewellyn Johns Recreation Area	323	138	-57%
	Rocky Point Recreation Area	5595	5151	-8%
	Shadehill Recreation Area	5834	4972	-15%
16	Custer State Park	41046	40833	-1%
	Angostura Recreation Area	14634	12958	-11%
	Bailey's Lakeside Use Area	51	16	-69%
17	Sheps Canyon Recreation Area	1995	1472	-26%
Total:		278570	257522	-8%

Division of Parks and Recreation
July 2026 Revenue by Item

	2025		2026		%
	Number	Dollar	Number	Dollar	Change
Resident Annual	8,443	\$ 316,141	8,379	\$ 315,320	
Non-Resident Annual	2,722	\$ 154,482	2,410	\$ 139,900	
Resident Double	3,680	\$ 217,625	3,688	\$ 215,445	
Non-Resident Double	985	\$ 87,667	858	\$ 76,305	
Transferable	229	\$ 20,320	238	\$ 21,290	
GSM Annual Trail Pass	919	\$ 18,240	1,112	\$ 21,820	
Annual Licenses	16,978	\$ 814,475	16,685	\$ 790,080	-3%
Resident Daily License	16,189	\$ 161,358	19,007	\$ 188,682	
Non-Resident Daily License	11,645	\$ 174,510	11,233	\$ 168,422	
Unattended Vehicle Daily	423	\$ 8,460	316	\$ 6,320	
GSM Daily Trail Pass	4,627	\$ 23,133	7,174	\$ 35,870	
Motorcoach Permit	2,391	\$ 9,532	3,651	\$ 14,604	
CSP 7 Day Pass	47,352	\$ 1,176,185	54,343	\$ 1,287,255	
CSP 7 Day Bike Band	11,011	\$ 219,100	5,959	\$ 119,050	
Rally Bike Band	6	\$ 120	2	\$ 40	
One-Day Special Event	15	\$ 1,500	12	\$ 1,200	
Festival Daily	-	\$ -	-	\$ -	
Daily Licenses	93,659	\$ 1,773,898	101,697	\$ 1,821,443	3%
Licenses	110,637	\$ 2,588,373	118,382	\$ 2,611,523	1%
Camping Services		\$ 1,274,268		\$ 1,229,958	-3%
Pet Fees	311	\$ 3,098	316	\$ 3,099	0%
LODGING		\$ 1,277,366		\$ 1,233,056	-3%
Picnic Shelters		\$ 2,440		\$ 6,435	164%
Boat Rentals		\$ 4,655		\$ 5,638	21%
Firewood	7,448	\$ 49,903	6,073	\$ 40,685	-18%
Gift Card	5	\$ 330	6	\$ 2,786	744%
Spring Creek Boat Slips		\$ -		\$ 2,781	
Recreational Equipment Rentals		\$ 11,922		\$ 12,210	2%
Retail		\$ 65,570		\$ 53,048	-19%
Call Center Fee	2,205	\$ 13,114	2,202	\$ 12,672	-3%
Cabin/Trailer Lease Permits		\$ 808		\$ 560	-31%
MISCELLANEOUS		\$ 148,742		\$ 136,815	-8%
TOTAL		\$ 4,014,480		\$ 3,981,394	-1%

Division of Parks and Recreation
August 2026 Revenue by Item

	2025		2026		%
	Number	Dollar	Number	Dollar	Change
Resident Annual	3,830	\$ 141,102	3,770	\$ 140,836	
Non-Resident Annual	1,315	\$ 74,420	1,194	\$ 69,095	
Resident Double	947	\$ 55,394	1,051	\$ 62,130	
Non-Resident Double	298	\$ 26,210	245	\$ 21,285	
Transferable	68	\$ 6,120	74	\$ 6,570	
GSM Annual Trail Pass	533	\$ 10,640	532	\$ 10,520	
Annual Licenses	6,991	\$ 313,886	6,866	\$ 310,436	-1%
Resident Daily License	11,284	\$ 112,462	10,900	\$ 108,600	
Non-Resident Daily License	8,642	\$ 129,525	7,725	\$ 115,860	
Unattended Vehicle Daily	299	\$ 5,945	234	\$ 4,680	
GSM Daily Trail Pass	2,339	\$ 11,695	1,777	\$ 8,885	
Motorcoach Permit	5,281	\$ 8,884	4,529	\$ 18,116	
CSP 7 Day Pass	37,713	\$ 937,330	38,882	\$ 938,882	
CSP 7 Day Bike Band	3,910	\$ 78,190	9,864	\$ 196,440	
Rally Bike Band	33,780	\$ 675,595	24,807	\$ 496,140	
One-Day Special Event	160	\$ 1,600	8	\$ 800	
Festival Daily	-	\$ -	1	\$ 20	
Daily Licenses	103,264	\$ 1,961,226	98,727	\$ 1,888,423	-4%
Licenses	110,255	\$ 2,275,112	105,593	\$ 2,198,859	-3%
Camping Services		\$ 945,110		\$ 951,628	1%
Pet Fees	231	\$ 2,294	249	\$ 2,308	1%
LODGING		\$ 947,404		\$ 953,935	1%
Picnic Shelters		\$ 1,840		\$ 4,694	155%
Boat Rentals		\$ 3,991		\$ 3,167	-21%
Firewood	7,304	\$ 48,945	5,876	\$ 39,393	-20%
Gift Card	10	\$ 380	7	\$ 355	-7%
Spring Creek Boat Slips		\$ -		\$ -	
Recreational Equipment Rentals		\$ 8,101		\$ 8,264	2%
Retail		\$ 43,859		\$ 38,192	-13%
Call Center Fee	2,137	\$ 12,610	1,955	\$ 11,334	-10%
Cabin/Trailer Lease Permits		\$ 64		\$ 160	150%
MISCELLANEOUS		\$ 119,790		\$ 105,558	-12%
TOTAL		\$ 3,342,306		\$ 3,258,352	-3%

Division of Parks and Recreation
August YTD 2026 Revenue by Item

	2025		2026		%
	Number	Dollar	Number	Dollar	Change
Resident Annual	38,086	\$ 1,493,207	37,905	\$ 1,440,211	
Non-Resident Annual	12,281	\$ 706,227	11,324	\$ 657,215	
Resident Double	32,734	\$ 1,944,384	34,283	\$ 2,008,552	
Non-Resident Double	5,339	\$ 475,103	5,583	\$ 491,003	
Transferable	2,588	\$ 231,273	2,701	\$ 238,830	
GSM Annual Trail Pass	4,989	\$ 99,315	5,078	\$ 99,420	
Annual Licenses	96,017	\$ 4,949,509	96,874	\$ 4,935,231	0%
Resident Daily License	49,649	\$ 494,568	50,114	\$ 499,307	
Non-Resident Daily License	35,370	\$ 530,115	33,270	\$ 496,751	
Unattended Vehicle Daily	1,178	\$ 23,460	866	\$ 17,310	
GSM Daily Trail Pass	13,776	\$ 68,736	13,388	\$ 66,940	
Motorcoach Permit	19,246	\$ 56,785	14,588	\$ 58,352	
CSP 7 Day Pass	153,726	\$ 3,814,150	167,106	\$ 4,061,337	
CSP 7 Day Bike Band	20,398	\$ 406,250	20,898	\$ 416,830	
Rally Bike Band	33,780	\$ 675,595	24,809	\$ 496,180	
One-Day Special Event	75	\$ 7,500	41	\$ 4,075	
Festival Daily	2,427	\$ 11,475	2,231	\$ 11,640	
Daily Licenses	329,625	\$ 6,088,634	327,311	\$ 6,128,722	1%
Licenses	425,642	\$ 11,038,143	424,185	\$ 11,063,953	0%
Camping Services		\$ 9,660,020		\$ 9,289,423	-4%
Pet Fees	1450	\$ 14,460	1977	\$ 18,822	30%
LODGING		\$ 9,674,480		\$ 9,308,244	-4%
Picnic Shelter		\$ 13,165		\$ 26,191	99%
Boat Rentals		\$ 15,868		\$ 13,940	-12%
Firewood	29,654	\$ 198,721	25,102	\$ 167,988	-15%
Gift Card	106	\$ 8,996	139	\$ 10,296	14%
Spring Creek Boat Slips		\$ 155,768		\$ 167,795	8%
Recreational Equipment Rentals		\$ 32,916		\$ 31,965	-3%
Retail		\$ 194,928		\$ 180,208	-8%
Call Center Fee	12,157	\$ 72,304	10,873	\$ 62,826	-13%
Cabin/Trailer Lease Permits		\$ 217,969		\$ 229,785	5%
MISCELLANEOUS		\$ 910,635		\$ 890,993	-2%
TOTAL		\$ 21,623,258		\$ 21,263,191	-2%

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

	2023		2024		2025*		3-Yr Avg		2026		% Change (3-Yr Avg)	
	\$	#	\$	#	\$	#	\$	#	\$	#	\$	#
Annual Licenses	\$ 4,003,005	101146	\$ 4,186,064	104577	\$ 4,949,509	96017	\$ 4,379,526	100580	\$ 4,935,231	96874	12.7%	-3.7%
Daily Licenses	\$ 4,472,953	296719	\$ 4,693,625	312282	\$ 6,088,634	329625	\$ 5,085,071	312875	\$ 6,128,722	327311	20.5%	4.6%
Camping/Lodging	\$ 8,645,194		\$ 8,638,685		\$ 9,674,480		\$ 8,986,120		\$ 9,308,244		3.6%	
Miscellaneous	\$ 642,131		\$ 803,393		\$ 910,635		\$ 785,386		\$ 890,993		13.4%	
Total	\$ 17,763,283	397865	\$ 18,321,767	416859	\$ 21,623,258	425642	\$ 19,236,103	413455	\$ 21,263,191	424185	10.5%	2.6%

* Fee increase in 2025

	2023*	2024	2025	3-Yr Avg	2026	% (3-yr Avg)
Camping Units	284335	286880	278570	283262	257522	-9.1%
Modern Lodging Nights Booked January 1 through December 31						
Lake Thompson		126	125	126	101	-19.5%
Mina Lake		105	144	125	160	28.5%
Newton Hills (3 units)		262	318	290	281	-3.1%
Oahe Downstream (5 units)		728	767	748	665	-11.0%
Palisades		131	115	123	131	6.5%
Pickrel Lake		103	159	131	146	11.5%
Roy Lake (12 units)		1275	1357	1316	1450	10.2%
Shadehill		133	161	147	161	9.5%
Sheps Canyon		87	75	81	73	-9.9%
Spring Creek (16 units)		1005	1030	1018	1429	40.4%
All Parks Total		3955	4251	4103	4597	12.0%

* Modern Lodging numbers for 2023 not available

RESOLUTION 26-04

WHEREAS, pursuant to ARSD § 41:06:26:06 (Antlerless elk contingency licenses) and § 41:06:26:07 (Eligibility for antlerless elk contingency licenses) the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Commission may issue antlerless elk contingency licenses up to 20 percent of all “antlerless elk” licenses available for all combined Black Hills elk hunting units.

WHEREAS, residents who were not issued an elk license for any elk drawing may apply for a contingency license. Landowner preference or preference points do not apply, and the purchase and receipt of a contingency license does not affect eligibility or preference in future lottery drawings for elk seasons; and

WHEREAS, Game, Fish and Parks has reviewed and discussed US Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service forage production models for the Black Hills with US Forest Service staff, in addition to elk population objectives and antlerless elk licenses; and

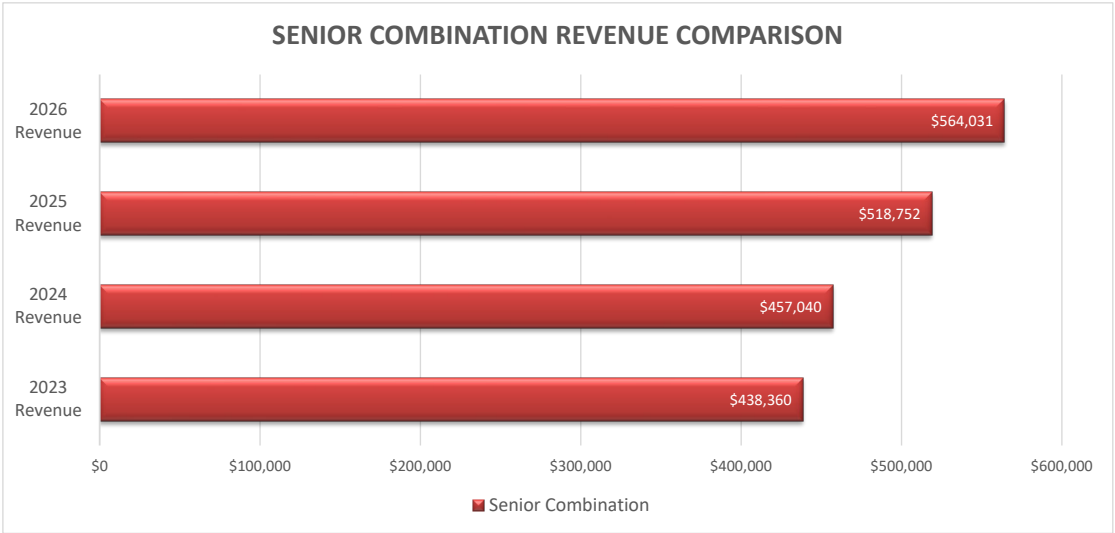
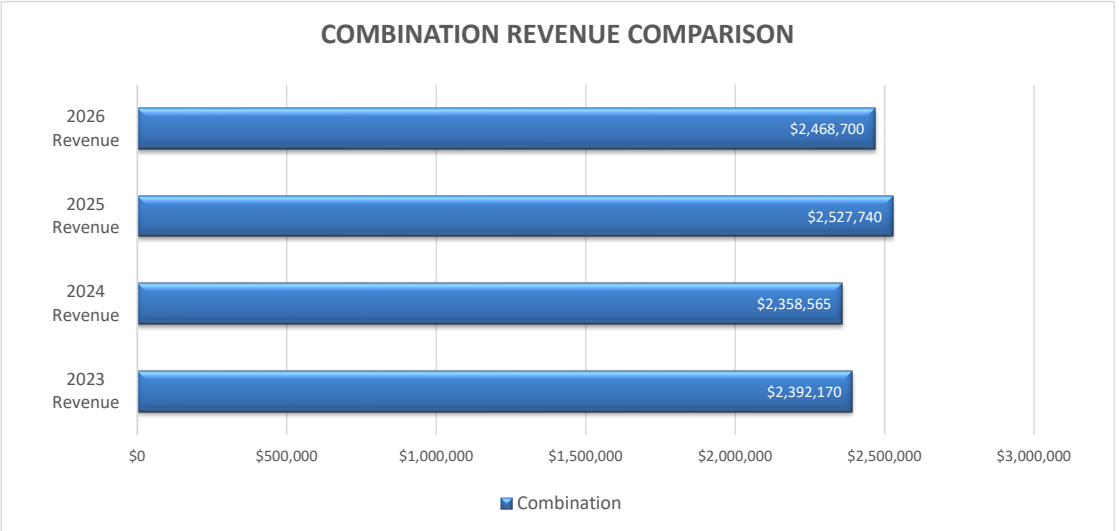
WHEREAS, Game, Fish and Parks has followed the decision support table in the Game, Fish and Parks elk action plan to provide a recommended number of antlerless elk contingency licenses; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, for the 2026 Black Hills Elk Hunting Season the Game, Fish and Parks Commission authorizes sixty-three antlerless elk contingency licenses to be made available. Among the sixty-three licenses; five will be available in BHE-H1B, eight will be available in BHE-H2BCD, five will be available in BHE-H2EFG, five will be available in BHE-H2HIJ, fourteen will be available in BHE-H3BCD, nine will be available in BHE-H3EFG, six will be available in BHE-H4B, five will be available in BHE-H7B, and six will be available in BHE-H9B.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Resolution and a record of the Commission’s discussions concerning same be made a part of the Minutes of the Commission meeting at which this Resolution is adopted.

COMBINATION LICENSES
December 15 - August 31

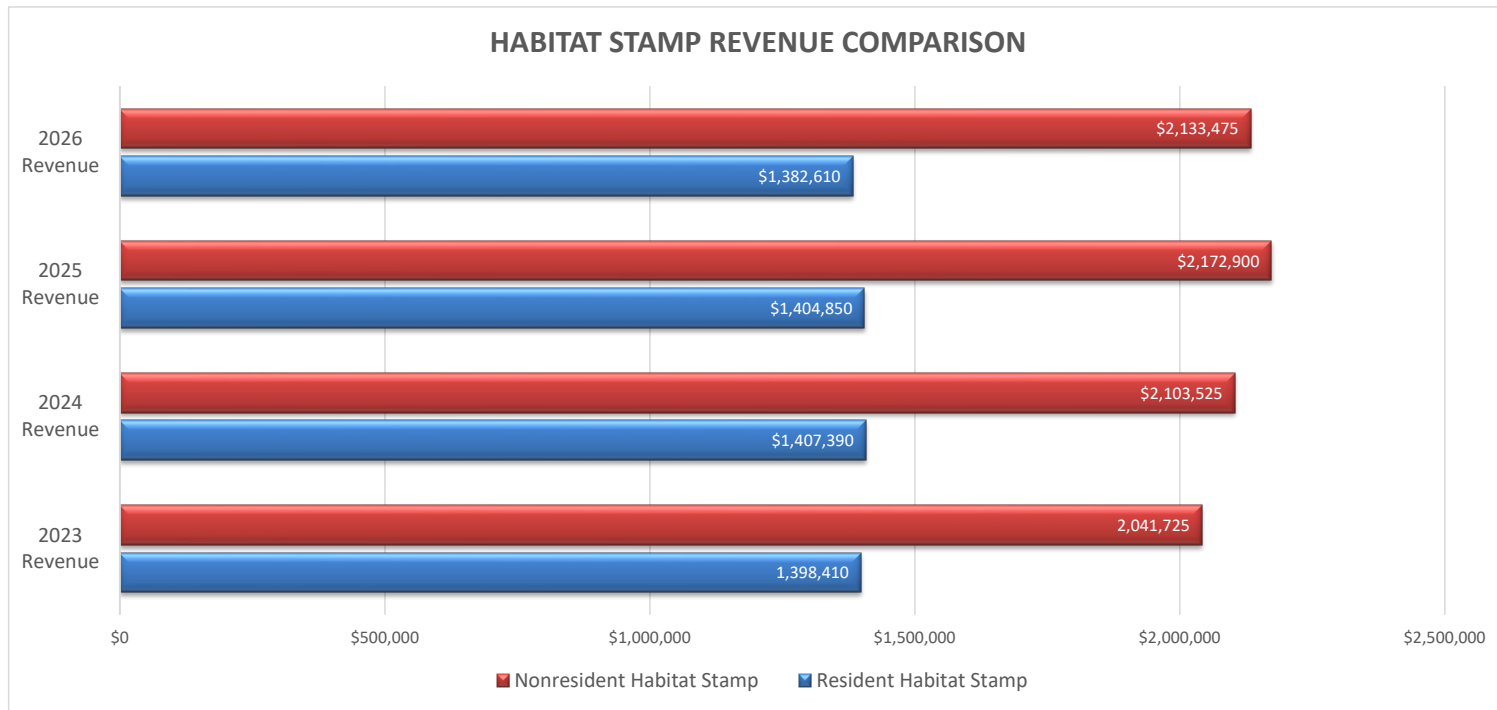
License Type	2023	2024	2025	3-yr Avg	2026	2026 Revenue	+/- Licenses		+/- Revenue		% Change from 3 Yr. Avg
							2025 vs 2026	3 Yr. Avg vs 2026	2025 vs 2026	3 Yr. Avg vs 2026	
Combination	43,494	42,883	42,129	42,835	41,145	\$2,468,700	(984)	(1,690)	(\$59,040)	\$42,542	-3.95%
Senior Combination	10,959	11,426	12,064	11,483	13,117	\$564,031	1,053	1,634	\$45,279	\$92,647	14.23%
Combination License Totals	54,453	54,309	54,193	54,318	54,262	\$3,032,731	69	(56)	(\$13,761)	\$135,189	10.28%



HABITAT STAMP

December 15 - August 31

License Type	2023	2024	2025	3-yr Avg	2026	2026 Revenue	+/- Licenses		+/- Revenue		% Change from 3 Yr. Avg
							2025 vs 2026	3 Yr. Avg vs 2026	2025 vs 2026	3 Yr. Avg vs 2026	
Resident Habitat Stamp	139,841	140,739	140,485	140,355	138,261	\$1,382,610	(2,224)	(2,094)	(\$22,240)	(\$20,940)	-1.49%
Nonresident Habitat Stamp	81,669	84,141	86,916	84,242	85,339	\$2,133,475	(1,577)	1,097	(\$39,425)	\$27,425	1.30%
Habitat Stamp Totals	221,510	224,880	227,401	224,597	223,600	\$3,516,085	(3,801)	(997)	(\$61,665)	\$6,485	-0.44%

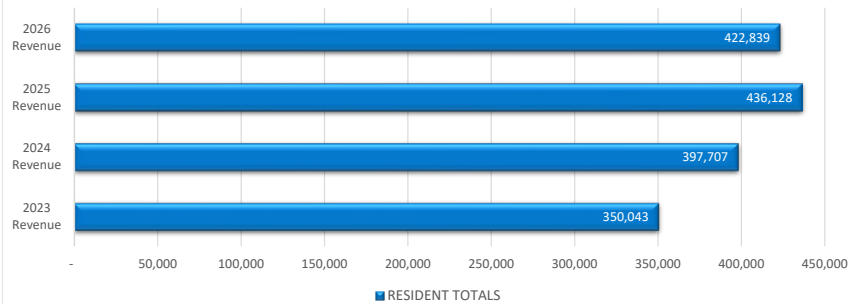


SMALL GAME LICENSES

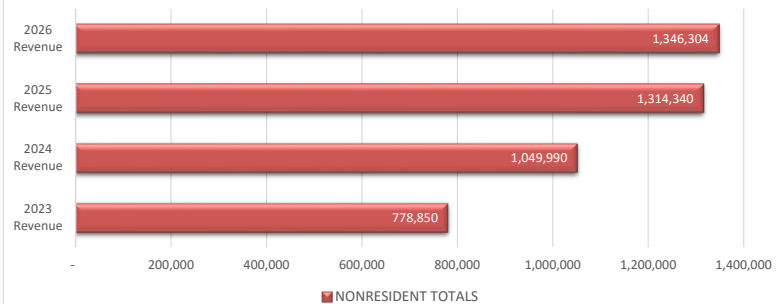
December 15 - August 31

License Type	+/- Licenses					+/- Revenue					% Change from 3 Yr. Avg
	2023	2024	2025	3-yr Avg	2026	2026 Revenue	2025 vs 2026	3 Yr. Avg vs 2026	2025 vs 2026	3 Yr. Avg vs 2026	
Small Game	5,784	7,047	7,461	6,764	7,176	\$258,336	(285)	412	(\$10,260)	\$27,663	6%
1-Day Small Game	103	213	205	174	246	\$3,690	41	72	\$615	\$1,401	42%
Youth Small Game	2,047	2,266	2,093	2,135	2,058	\$10,290	(35)	(77)	(\$175)	(\$387)	-4%
Mentor Small Game	n/a	n/a	154	n/a	402	\$2,010	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Furbearer	2,949	3,144	3,253	3,115	3,361	\$104,191	108	246	\$3,348	\$9,647	8%
Predator/Varmint	1,593	1,388	1,074	1,352	1,077	\$6,462	3	(275)	\$18	(\$654)	-20%
Migratory Bird Certificate: 3-Duck	718	572	377	556	332	\$1,660	(45)	(224)	(\$225)	(\$1,118)	-40%
Migratory Bird Certificate: Traditional	9,535	9,430	8,810	9,258	7,240	\$36,200	(1,570)	(2,018)	(\$7,850)	(\$10,092)	-22%
RESIDENT TOTALS	22,729	24,060	23,427	23,354	21,892	\$422,839	(1,535)	(1,640)	(\$14,529)	\$26,460	-7.02%
Small Game	4,250	6,351	6,715	5,772	6,792	\$964,464	77	1,020	\$10,934	\$266,052	18%
Youth Small Game	260	409	416	362	390	\$3,900	(26)	28	(\$260)	\$283	8%
Mentor Small Game	n/a	n/a	9	n/a	112	\$1,120	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Shooting Preserve 1-Day Nonresident	111	183	221	172	268	\$13,400	47	96	\$2,350	\$5,503	56%
Shooting Preserve 5-Day Nonresident	994	1,100	1,336	1,143	1,469	\$141,024	133	326	\$12,768	\$54,131	28%
Shooting Preserve Annual Nonresident	75	71	69	72	95	\$13,870	26	23	\$3,796	\$5,198	33%
Furbearer	2	5	1	3	4	\$1,300	3	1	\$975	\$567	0%
Predator/Varmint	3,691	3,717	4,020	3,809	4,046	\$186,116	26	237	\$1,196	\$33,743	6%
Migratory Bird Certificate: 3-Duck	179	162	146	162	155	\$775	9	(7)	\$45	(\$37)	-5%
Migratory Bird Certificate: Traditional	4,638	5,191	4,241	4,690	4,067	\$20,335	(174)	(623)	(\$870)	(\$3,115)	-13%
NONRESIDENT TOTALS	14,200	17,189	17,174	16,185	17,398	\$1,346,304	224	1,101	\$30,934	\$362,325	6.80%
COMBINED TOTALS	36,929	41,249	40,601	39,539	39,290	\$1,769,143	(1,311)	(249)	\$16,405	\$388,785	-0.63%

RESIDENT HUNTING REVENUE COMPARISON



NONRESIDENT HUNTING REVENUE COMPARISON



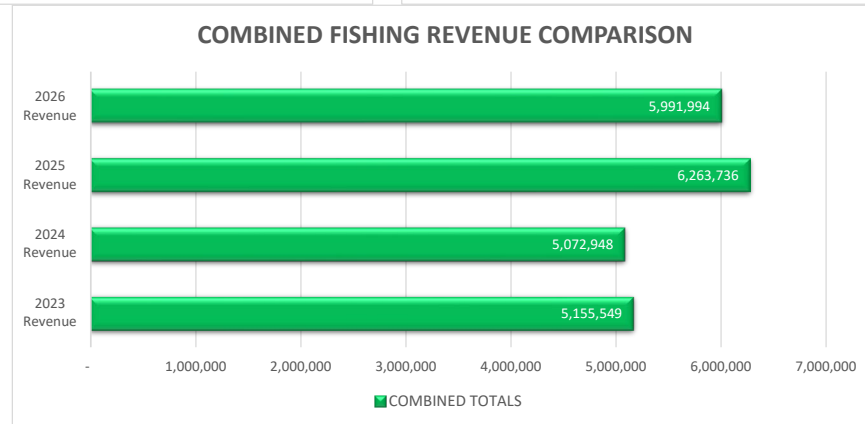
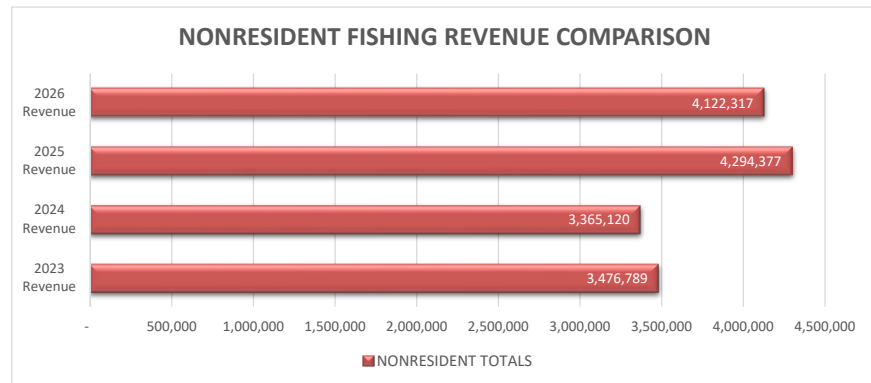
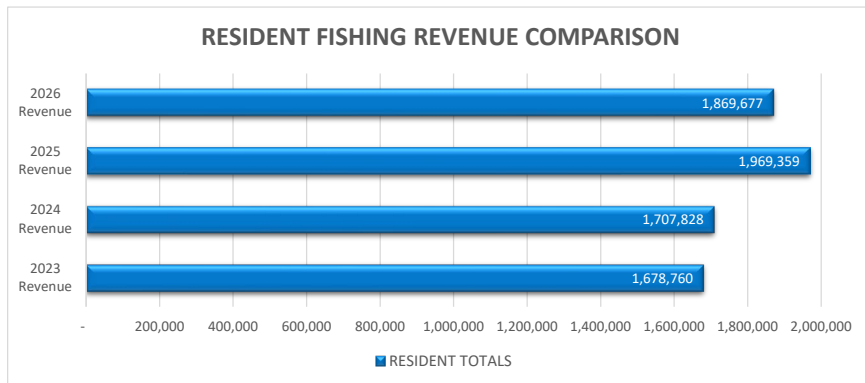
COMBINED HUNTING REVENUE COMPARISON



FISHING LICENSES

December 15 - August 31

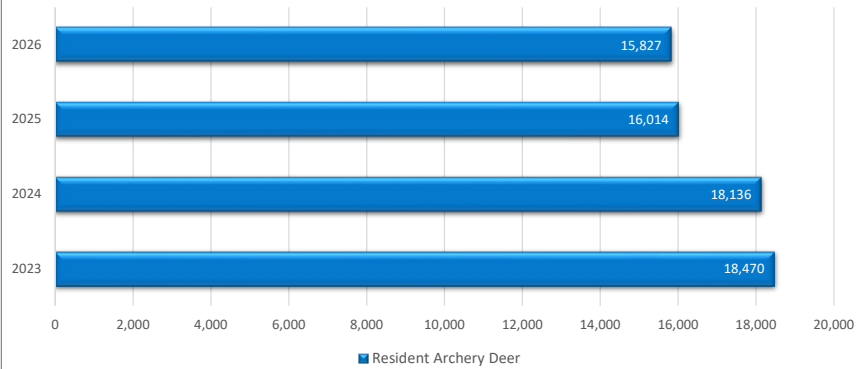
License Type							+/- Licenses		+/- Revenue		% Change
	2023	2024	2025	3-yr Avg	2026	2026 Revenue	2025 vs 2026	3 Yr. Avg vs 2026	2025 vs 2026	3 Yr. Avg vs 2026	from 3 Yr. Avg
1-Day Fishing	5,742	6,255	6,043	6,013	5,104	\$51,040	(939)	(909)	(\$9,390)	(\$1,095)	-15%
Annual Fishing	52,514	53,280	54,134	53,309	51,750	\$1,604,250	(2,384)	(1,559)	(\$73,904)	\$57,455	-3%
Senior Fishing	13,536	13,829	13,575	13,647	12,611	\$214,387	(964)	(1,036)	(\$16,388)	\$28,002	-8%
RESIDENT TOTALS	71,792	73,364	73,752	72,969	69,465	1,869,677	(4,287)	(3,504)	(\$99,682)	\$84,361	-4.80%
1-Day Fishing	30,057	29,873	22,147	27,359	20,517	\$533,442	(1,630)	(6,842)	(\$42,380)	\$21,875	-25%
3-Day Fishing	15,804	15,196	17,751	16,250	16,951	\$762,795	(800)	701	(\$36,000)	\$114,197	4%
Annual Fishing	35,987	34,700	36,497	35,728	35,326	\$2,826,080	(1,171)	(402)	(\$93,680)	\$274,150	-1%
NONRESIDENT TOTALS	81,848	79,769	76,395	79,337	72,794	\$4,122,317	(3,601)	(6,543)	(\$172,060)	\$410,222	-8.25%
COMBINED TOTALS	153,640	153,133	150,147	152,307	142,259	\$5,991,994	(7,888)	(10,048)	(\$271,742)	\$494,583	-6.60%



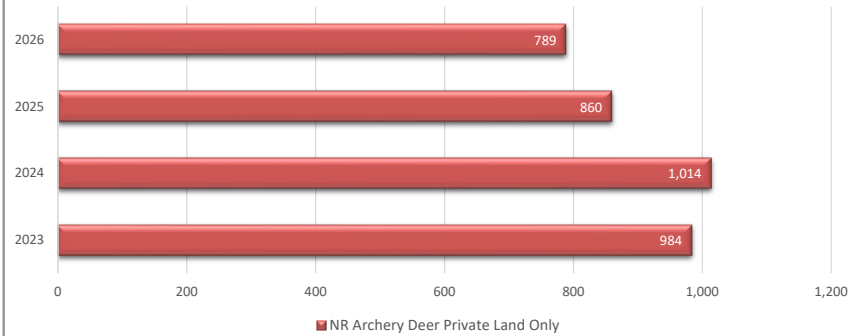
2026 BIG GAME LICENSES

License Type							+/- Licenses		+/- Revenue		% Change from
	2023	2024	2025	3-yr Avg	2026	2026 Revenue	2025 vs 2026	3 Yr. Avg vs 2026	2025 vs 2026	3 Yr. Avg vs 2026	3 Yr. Avg
Resident Archery Deer	18,470	18,136	16,014	17,540	15,827	\$659,778	(187)	(1713)	\$31,058	\$864	-10%
NR Archery Deer Private Land Only	984	1,014	860	953	789	\$295,875	(71)	(164)	(\$25,913)	(\$1,864)	-17%
Resident Archery Antelope	1,915	1,940	1,975	1,943	1,822	\$81,990	(153)	(121)	\$32,085	\$39,655	-6%
Nonresident Archery Antelope Private Land Only	333	347	364	348	359	\$134,625	(5)	11	\$61,500	\$45,423	3%
Resident Mentored Deer	2,666	2,594	931	2,064	1,072	\$5,360	141	(992)	\$705	(\$9,246)	-48%
NR Mentored Deer	83	97	78	86	103	\$1,030	25	17	\$125	(\$327)	20%

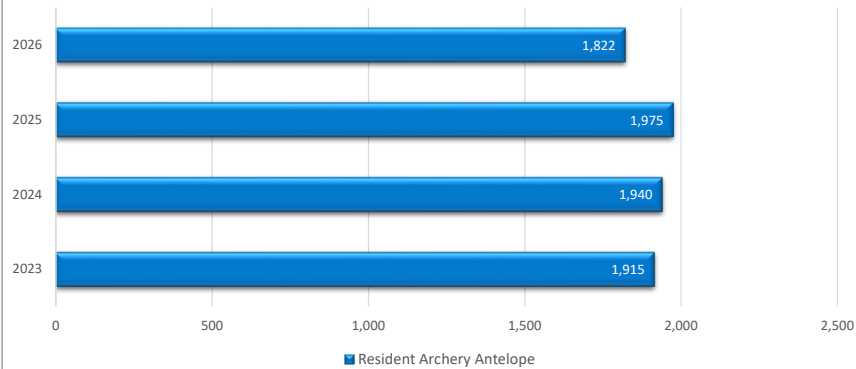
RESIDENT ARCHERY DEER LICENSES ISSUED



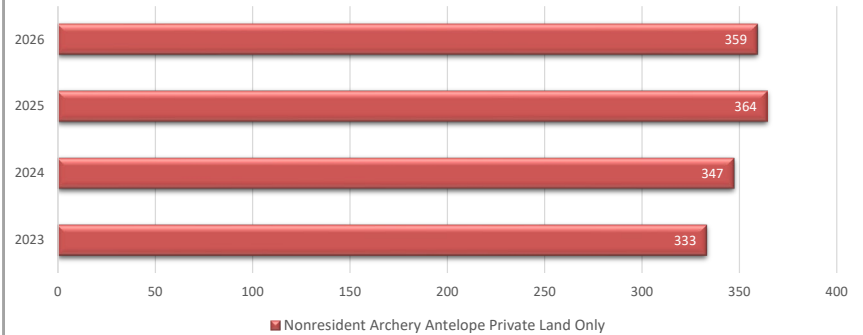
NONRESIDENT ARCHERY DEER - PRIVATE LAND ONLY LICENSES ISSUED



RESIDENT ARCHERY ANTELOPE LICENSES ISSUED



NONRESIDENT ARCHERY ANTELOPE - PRIVATE LAND ONLY LICENSES ISSUED



Public Comments

Apprentice, Mentor, and Youth Deer Licenses

Dominick Foley

Estherville IA

Position: oppose

Comment:

After working for the Iowa DNR research team specifically on muskies I believe this would be detrimental to the South Dakota musky fishery as these fish have the capability of easily reaching upper 40's into the 50's and if you implement this your opportunity of having a trophy musky fishery would be heavily impacted. These fish need to be protected and not not opened up for harvest, there are plenty of other fish that can be harvested that are in the lake systems and there is no need for these to be harvested.

Other

Darren Hoff

Brookings SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

There is no reason to allow out of state hunters to purchase licenses for mountain lion hunting. The Science Behind Trophy Hunting Why Might Hunting Increase Conflicts? Mountain lions were once abundant across North America, but widespread hunting drastically reduced their numbers by the 1960s. Since then, many states have allowed hunting them again, with quotas and regulations.

There are three purported reasons why states allow trophy hunting of mountain lions:

1. Increase ungulate populations (deer and elk) for hunters
2. Reduce Mountain lion conflicts with humans (public safety)
3. Reduce Mountain lion conflicts with livestock and pets (depredation)

However, recent studies looking at actual data tell a different story. There's little evidence that trophy hunting significantly boosts deer and elk populations for hunters. Surprisingly, the studies show a positive association between trophy hunting and human-lion conflicts. In other words, hunting might actually increase these conflicts. Trophy hunters often target large, dominant males. This disrupts the social structure of mountain lion populations.

Younger, less experienced males take over the vacated territories. These younger males may be more likely to attack livestock or even people because they have less knowledge of their territory and prey availability. Face more competition from other males. 2 CATs Aren't Trophies Aggressive Trophy Hunting of Mountain Lions May Exacerbate Human Conflicts with Wildlife.

California's Different Approach California banned trophy hunting of mountain lions in 1972. Instead, the state manages conflicts with non-lethal methods like hazing and relocation. California's approach seems to be working: It has a healthy mountain lion population. Its depredation rates (attacks on livestock) are similar to states with trophy hunting.

The Importance of Apex Predators Mountain lions play a crucial role in the ecosystem. They help keep prey populations healthy by: Removing sick and weak animals ("predator cleansing"). This can help slow the spread of diseases like Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in deer and elk herds.

Trophy hunting of mountain lions may not achieve the goals wildlife agencies claim. It might even increase human-lion conflicts. States should consider alternative, non-lethal management strategies like California's approach. Protecting mountain lions benefits the overall health of the ecosystem.

David Christy

Warwick RI

Position: other

Comment:

file attached

Haden Stoffel

Salem SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

I oppose allowing the harvest of muskellunge over 45 inches in South Dakota. Muskies are slow-growing fish, and reaching trophy size takes many years. Large adult fish are especially valuable because they provide memorable fishing opportunities and contribute to successful reproduction. Removing even a small number of these fish could reduce the quality of South Dakota's limited muskie fisheries. South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks should continue managing muskellunge as a catch-and-release fishery rather than allowing fish over 45 inches to be harvested. Anglers can still take measurements, photographs, and replicas without killing the fish.

Aaron Callies

Madison SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

I am writing as I sit at home with a torn acl I'm sure this won't go far with you guys but I have lived in south dakota my whole life and sent in for a west river deer tag with 7 years preference and was denied again..it is disappointing to me to sit here and watch videos of all the out of state people that have multiple tags in our state almost every year and here I sit a local that can't draw one with 7 years..this isn't the only time this has happened for me or my friends but yet you guys give out of state tags all the time and these people make videos for all to see to rush to our state to get archery tags..again I'm sure won't go far with you guys as I feel like your more for money than us locals but you should remember out of state people pay so much for tags they do not support are business's as well they save there by staying in campers and bringing there own food..so now that you give all these archery tags to out of state people who come here we do not have the opportunities anymore because are mule deer population is seeing the affects..you can say it's this and it's that but I know the real reason I'm a hunter..been to the same spot for years and all I see is out of state plates..maybe make them send in for a draw for archery deer and save stuff for us locals like every other state.. I just feel disappointed that our state is more worried about more money when us locals give more than anyone just so out of state people can come take what we have built for granted and dont want to drive back to Florida or Ohio empty handed so they shoot anything..again just disappointing that me and my kids will have to seek out of state hunts just to hunt a buck somewhere as I was denied both tags again this year..I hope that you can see my side of this but your guys changes to our tag draw is ridiculous and now I am looking into other states to hunt were it is a draw in almost all of them and way to expensive but I love to hunt and have to do what I can to keep hunting..thanks for your time and I hope I'm not the only one writing to you with the same concerns..

Tanner Bouchard

Milford IA

Position: oppose

Comment:

I oppose the upcoming rules change for being able to keep muskies over 45 inches. Muskies should be catch and release, numerous studies have been done by states with much more hands on musky research teams than south dakota, and all studies have shown that having large adult muskies in lakes with walleye and pike, produces large walleye and pike than lakes without muskies. Your state stocked these fish to be trophy fish, and to provide opportunities to anglers. Catch and release fishing only is the best way to achieve this. As a non resident, I am more likely to come muskie fishing in South Dakota because of the catch and release laws, than if it were a state that allows you to keep them. For tourism, for the health of the fisheries do not implement the 45 inch size limit.

Mike Peterson

Freeman SD

Position: other

Comment:

tried to send petition computer wont send it didnt accept my phone number i gave both what should i do

Christian Thury

Bemidji MN

Position: support

Comment:

Maintaining a trophy Muskie fishery is also maintaining quality fishing for multiple species. Look at Minnesota. Quality Muskie waters also have quality walleye, bass, panfish fishing. Talk to MN DNR fisheries management. They will all tell you.

Travis Hultgren

Lakeland MN

Position: oppose

Comment:

I oppose the harvest of trophy muskies in South Dakota. The claim ,that they don't get that big in South Dakota is false and the numbers of fish my fellow anglers and South Dakota own netting results prove its false. Please protect this resource.

Jason Berning

Wheaton MN

Position: oppose

Comment:

Do not change the Muskellunge limit keep it catch and release only. You are trying to create a trophy fishery why not let them grow so others can have a chance to feel the same thrill and exhilaration an angler gets when they catch one of these. As far as being able to keep a trophy fish with the replicas today they cost just as much as a skin mount and will look the same 30 years down the road as the day they do when they are brought

home. SD has the potential to grow true trophy size fish 50" and more so why not let them grow. If you want to make a harvest of a trophy fish make the limit 1 over 54" or higher like everywhere else in the musky range.

Jonathan Brown

Brandon SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

I am respectfully opposed to a Musky rule change allowing a 45 inch fish to be taken.

I respectfully request that Muskies remain catch-and -release only.

Muskies are a precious resource and should be managed such that several anglers can enjoy the same fish and allow it to grow into a true trophy size of 50 inches plus. The "trophy" should be only the photograph prior to a successful release.

As a compromise, I would also be fine with a 54 inch minimum length...but even if I caught one of those, I would release it.

I appreciate all the GFP does to promote both walleye fishing and musky fishing.

Thank you.

Jonathan P Brown
25857 480th Ave
Brandon SD 57005
605-310-6282

Kel Stroud

Vermillion SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

South Dakota's muskies are a fragile, limited resource that deserve to be protected—not harvested once they reach 45 inches. These fish are stocked, there is no documented natural reproduction, and we only have a handful of musky waters in the entire state. The large muskies being caught are especially valuable to the fishery. There is simply no positive biological benefit to removing a trophy musky. Keeping South Dakota's muskies catch-and-release is the best way to protect this unique fishery for future generations. I will no longer be interested in going to South Dakota to musky fish if they're being harvested.

Brandon Lambert

Sioux Falls SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Leave the musky C&R

Dylan Herr

Dell Rapids SD

Position: support

Comment:

I support the rule change from catch and release to 45 inch minimum on muskies. There is plenty of these fish in the lakes that have them. To catch one and have the chance to mount it and cherish the memory for ever would be great. A hand full of fish taken out of these lakes will not hurt the fishery.

Casey Baumgarn

Webster SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

I oppose the idea of changing the catch and release musky regulation. There really isn't a scenario that makes sense to keep a musky. Let the fish survive and do a replica if you want a mount.

We already have very few musky in this state, why make it even less by letting anglers keep a fish.

Mike Ruff

Cold Spring MN

Position: oppose

Comment:

I oppose the harvesting of a mere 45" musky.

I looks like availability of this species is already limited in South Dakota. A Musky of this size has a lot of life left and should be experieced by others as well. I'm sure to replace it would take a lot of time and money by Fisheries Mngmt. If the goal of fishery management is to make available this fish population, harvest at this level seems counter productive. A cell phone picture could save the experience ie framed enlargment and/or mount for the angler. Mn's length limit is 54".

Jake Cheeseman

Salem SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

I strongly oppose the 45 inch musky harvest regulation. As a musky angler, a musky in South Dakota are very rare to come by. There are only 5 lakes with them and you can only put a 18 foot boat in only 2 of them. South Dakota doesn't have that many lakes with them, it is so limited. Muskies populations are small and fragile. The experience to catch a Muskie, especially in South Dakota, is all about getting the picture and getting it back in the water for the next angler. They're not an eating fish and getting a replica mount made of it is the gold standard if someone is wishing to mount the fish. South Dakota has been the state that has built a reputation as the state that's done it the right way since the 2018 commission changed it to catch and release only, let's keep it that way. South Dakota's limited musky fishing lasts only as long as we choose to protect it.

Scott Vander Meulen

Sioux Falls SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Please OPPOSE the proposed musky harvest proposal.
Keep Catch N Release.
Support the work of the previous commission.
South Dakota does not have enough of a musky population to begin with.

Scott Vander Meulen

Sioux Falls SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Please OPPOSE the proposed musky harvest proposal.
Keep Catch N Release.
Support the work of the previous commission.
South Dakota does not have enough of a musky population to begin with.

Donald Myers

Ankeny IA

Position: oppose

Comment:

My name is Donald Myers. I am the Muskies, Inc. Chapter 55 President in the Des Moines, Iowa area. I have exclusively fished muskies for 32 years, across seven states, including South Dakota. I have personally boated over 250 muskies in this time. I have been actively involved in fisheries, youth, and research on MUE spawning activity, predation and survival rates, diet, travel range, barometric pressure studies, recirculating aquaculture systems for fingerlings, netting and tagging, and more. I have raised just shy of \$100,000 in funds to support MUE research activities in Central Iowa Reservoir Systems.

From my experience, allowing harvest of MUE 45+ inches is detrimental to both the MUE ability to reproduce, and overall management of many waterways. MUE diet greatly consists of "rough fish." Removing a top predator from the waterway can often have inverse affect on undesired populations of fish. With the limited supply of 45+ inch fish in SD, each capture/harvest will represent a statistically significant percentage of fish.

David Mosier

Urbandale IA

Position: oppose

Comment:

As a Musky Fisherman, I believe that allowing anglers the ability to keep a trophy fish over 45 inches is a fatal mistake. It takes over a decade for the fish to grow that large. With your current stocking program, it would decimate your population in no time.

Beau Bush

Pella IA

Position: oppose

Comment:

I'm not a South Dakota resident and don't regularly fish its musky waters, but I have heard South Dakota spoken of highly within the musky community. That reputation is worth protecting. With such a limited number of musky waters available, allowing anglers to harvest fish over 45 inches seems like a step in the wrong direction. The current catch-and-release regulation gives South Dakota a unique identity as a destination where anglers can pursue quality muskies while knowing those fish will remain in the system for others to catch. I respectfully encourage SDGFP to keep the existing catch-and-release regulation in place and continue building on what has made South Dakota's musky fishery so well regarded.

Pete Maina

Hayward WI

Position: oppose

Comment:

Strongly oppose the change to current muskie regulations of catch and release only. Should be maintained as is

Jacob Rehnstrom

Watertown SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

As a avid musky fisherman in south dakota there is no need to keep a musky in this state there are to few lakes and they are not stocked on a regular basis to support any harvest

Grant Dehaai

Sioux Falls SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Dear GFP,
Please OPPOSE the new muskie harvest proposal.
We do not have enough muskies in SD to be harvesting them.

Jessica Gardner

Sioux Falls SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Dear game fish and parks, please OPPOSE the new Muskie harvest proposal. We do not have enough muskies in South Dakota to harvest.

Grant Dehaai

Sioux Falls SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Dear Game, Fish and Parks,
please OPPOSE the new muskie harvest proposal. we do not have enough muskies to harvest in South Dakota

Gavin Dehaai

Sioux Falls SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

as a south dakota hunter and fisher, i ask that you vote AGAINST the proposal to have 45 inch minimum size limit and a possession limit of two muskies. i do not want this, with many of my friends.
please keep it catch and release. it is an amazing fish and want to keep them around for my kids to cherish.

Aaron Heimkes

Pequot Lakes MN

Position: oppose

Comment:

I am writing to voice my opposition to the proposed removal of the catch and release muskellunge regulation and implementing a new 45" minimum instead. Muskies are a fragile resource and they deserve to be protected. The current catch and release regulations have overwhelming support amongst the muskie angling community.

Glen Zupfer

Yankton SD

Position: other

Comment:

I would like to propose eliminating the slot restriction on paddlefish for Gavin's Point season. Between both South Dakota and Nebraska anglers snagging these fish, once a person does get a fish that is legal to be taken, the fish has been torn up, handled numerous times and released only to be beat up again. By the time the fish comes of legal size, if it reaches that size, it definitely shows signs of this. I would suggest reducing the amount of tags issued and removing the slot restriction. After participating in the Francis Case season, and deciding to keep my first snagged fish, the fish are healthier and have endured less stress. This is would be especially beneficial as the population of paddlefish below Gavin's already have to compete with the Invasive Carp for their food, and are not as healthy to begin with. As a participant in numerous unsuccessful seasons at Gavin Point, and a single season on Francis Case, I would rather wait the 5 to 6 years for a healthy fish and avoid the Gavin's season all together.

Hans Alwin

Sioux Falls SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Opposing the petition to legalize the harvest of muskies over 45". I would petition to make any harvest of

muskie illegal to support the growth of the very limited current population.

Christian Thury

Bemidji MN

Position: oppose

Comment:

Minnesota has a trophy Muskie fishery. South Dakota can be too. Please leave the fish alone. Catch, photo, release is a conservation method to preserve any fishery for the next generation.

Richard Pearson

Webster SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Leave the muskie regs as they are. Insane to kill the biggest/ most valuable fish we have and that are sought after by residents and non residents

Ben Tollefson

Delano MN

Position: oppose

Comment:

I oppose lowering the musky size limit to 45" on the basis of preserving a trophy fishery that's entirely supported by stocking. I regularly chase Muskies when visiting my family in the Webster area, and would regret seeing a set back for the program.

Musky anglers are interested in catching trophies, not putting meat on the table. If a catch and release regulation is unacceptable, I encourage the DNR to follow the lead of MN's world class program and set a minimum size limit if 54".

Nick Johnson

Big Lake MN

Position: oppose

Comment:

I oppose the harvest of 45" muskellunge and greater. South Dakota has very few lakes stocked with muskellunge and this would greatly harm those already small populations. It takes a musky 10-12 years to reach that length and dwindling the amount of those big fish would greatly diminish an anglers motivation to target them. This would be like harvesting every 26"+ walleye that one would catch. Now imagine what a walleye anglers viewpoint would be on that.

Justin Sharer

St Cloud MN

Position: oppose

Comment:

Let the muskies go, and they will grow. Big fish create destination fisheries. Destination fisheries bring tourism and out of state dollars. It worked in Minnesota, especially since the last chage to 54". I lived it, I know it, I catch them, and I'll go anywhere to chase them. My truck odometer and trailer hubs can verify that. Trophy fish potential shift the trucks from park to drive.

Thomas Wagner

Perrysburg OH

Position: support

Comment:

I was thinking there's 0 benefit in keeping a musky. Bragging rights is only thing I can come up with and that does not justify keeping. Pictures tell a 1000 words

Cole Jackson

Park Rapids MN

Position: support

Comment:

I am in SUPPORT of keeping Muskie fishing CATCH AND RELEASE ONLY!

I will be able to travel from MN to South Dakota to enjoy fishing for me and my family. Muskie fishermen bring in money to South Dakota. Keep Muskie fishing Catch and Release.

Rhonda Deinert

Mitchell SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Hagen's Fishing in Mitchell, SD opposes allowing the harvest of muskies 45 inches and larger. We need to increase opportunities for the sport of fishing. Allowing the harvest would greatly limit or eliminate the opportunity to enjoy the catch and release of musky.

Anthony Volk

Aberdeen SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

I oppose changing the muskie size to 45 inches. Should be catch and release only

Barry Winkler

Aberdeen SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

I oppose changing Muskie limit to 45

Jon Cutler

Groton SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

I oppose the changing the musky minimum. I also strongly oppose keeping a musky. If someone wants to keep a giant fish, keep a pike.

Blake Anderson

Groton SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

I oppose the proposed change in Muskie regulations. Leave it like it is.

Raygen Randall

Brookings SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

I believe South Dakota should recognize the value of labeling muskies as catch-and-release only. This designation shows that South Dakota values muskies as a unique recreational resource and wants to build a quality trophy fishery.

With so few muskie waters and no documented natural reproduction, protecting mature fish is especially important. A large muskie can provide memorable experiences for countless anglers over its lifetime, while harvesting it ends that opportunity permanently.

Catch-and-release only isn't just a regulation—it's a statement that South Dakota values its muskie fishery for the long term.

Taylor Anderson

Groton SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

No comment text provided.

Nick Mohs

Bloomington MN

Position: oppose

Comment:

I'm an out-of-state musky angler, and I've considered making the trip to South Dakota to fish for muskies. But if this regulation passes, I won't be making that trip. As a catch-and-release angler, I want to know that the fish I travel for have the best chance of being there for someone else to catch someday. I hope SDGFP keeps South Dakota's musky fishery catch-and-release.

Marissa Cheeseman

Hartford SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

I support keeping muskies in South Dakota catch-and-release only. I don't fish myself, but I believe our state should protect these unique, limited fisheries and the trophy fish that people come from all over to enjoy. This would have a great impact on the reproduction of these fish. Removing large females reduces the egg population as the size of the fish increases the urn egg production. This would greatly affect the population overall for years to come. Please keep the current catch-and-release regulation in place.

Cole Cheeseman

Hartford SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

As someone who fishes in South Dakota, I'd like to see muskies remain C&R. It's pretty cool to have a fishery like this in our state, and I don't see a reason to start taking these bigger fish out of it. I hope the Commission keeps the current regulation.

Jack Munsterteiger

Buffalo MN

Position: oppose

Comment:

I have been musky fishing for years in Minnesota and the great state of South Dakota. Revoking catch and release on all muskies would be a horrible decision that would hurt this great state. I hope you make your decision wisely and think about the wonderful people of SD.

Marcus Quam

Webster SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Musky should remain catch and release only! There are plenty of reasons for this which to name a few would be low numbers in very few lakes, they are known as a sport fish and are not targeted for food. I haven't heard of issues with the current regulations and don't see a need to change it.

Josh Karch

Moorhead MN

Position: other

Comment:

I am commenting on behalf of Fargo Moorhead Chapter of Muskies Inc. regarding the proposed change to muskie harvest regulations. We are opposed the change that would allow harvest of 45 inch muskies.

Jeremy Cummings

Rapid City SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

I strongly oppose the proposed harvest of 45"+ muskies. Until we get a more established fishery of Muskies we must protect the ones we have. The development of the RAS system and growing more muskies in more SD waters could change harvest them, but until that time they must be protected. The majority of anglers would rather have the opportunity to catch and release a fish rather than harvest a trophy. If we can develop the RAS further and thereby develop a sustainable musky fishery it would be a great benefit to SD. Musky fishing is a big deal in MN and Iowa and would be a big deal for SD.

Cody Hutchinson

Rapid City SD

Position: support

Comment:

I support Muskie harvest. Populations need control efforts and human intervention to thrive. Catch and release will not work as a policy.

Clint Hay

Brookings SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Keep it catch and release.

Adam Houdeshell

Platte SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Platte Creek Store & Campground opposes the proposed regulation allowing the harvest of muskies 45 inches and larger in South Dakota. With only five muskie lakes in the state and very limited access, the opportunity to catch a trophy muskie is rare. A trophy fish opportunity is worth protecting for current and future South Dakota anglers. We believe muskies should remain catch-and-release.

Zachary Pawlowski

Alcester SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

I respectfully oppose the proposed change allowing the harvest of muskellunge.

Muskies are a very slow growing fish that require many years to reach trophy size. A 45 inch minimum would still allow the harvest of mature, valuable fish from what are relatively limited populations. Once a large muskie is removed, it can take years to replace that fish through stocking and natural growth.

The sport of muskie fishing is growing, and South Dakota should be building a quality, trophy class fishery, not increasing harvest opportunities. Catch and release provides anglers with the opportunity to enjoy these fish repeatedly while protecting the long term quality of the fishery.

I respectfully ask the GFP Commission to retain the current regulations for muskellunge.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Gary Mattson

Crosby MN

Position: oppose

Comment:

I strongly oppose allowing the harvest of muskies 45" and larger. Muskies are a very low density species and 45" fish are far from what muskies anglers consider a trophy fish. In Minnesota we have seen how quickly cuts in the stocking rates. Can equate to significant drops in the population. Allowing the harvest of medium size muskies will result in a significant drop in the population.

Aidan Bouman

Vermillion SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

I have many friends that fish for muskies here in South Dakota and this appears to be a step backwards. A good fishery is what makes South Dakota fishing the way it is. Allowing the harvest of a musky will clearly create less opportunity and quality of the limited fishery for muskies in South Dakota. I believe SDGFP should be talking about ways to improve the fishery instead. I urge SDGFP Commission to oppose the harvest regulation and keep catch & release.

Chris Kassube

Aberdeen SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

This is stupid to even think of opening the musky fishing to keep any. Come on

Gabe Grant

Tea SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

There's a reason why the best fisheries in the northern Midwest contain Muskie. Harvesting a fish over 45 inches doesn't benefit anything or anyone but the uneducated fisherman who catches it and mistreats it. A great majority of fishermen know that keeping a Muskie is frowned upon in the fishing community. We have recently stocked and put money into our Muskie lakes in 2018... so why ruin the work we have started? Pointless and unnecessary that this is even a proposal. Protect our Muskies!

Twad Wadman

Groton SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

I oppose the 45" Muskie minimum. Catch and release only.

Brad Sheridan

Aberdeen SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Dear Commissioners,

This is my eleventh-year fishing for Muskies. I'm from Aberdeen, South Dakota and call Lynn Lake my home fishery. I've been fortunate enough to fish as far South as Kentucky and as far North as Ontario. I've met a plethora of people I now call friends in all parts of the country fishing the Professional Musky Tournament Trail with my wife. In my opinion, we need to keep the law Catch and Release only on Muskies.

The first reason I believe we need to keep the current law is because of the number of Muskies we have in our systems. In South Dakota, our lakes are minimumly stocked. Due to the low inventory of Muskies, we need to protect the resources we have. With advancements in fishing electronics, it's really opened my eyes on the amount fish we have and I can tell you we don't have much compared to other fisheries.

The second reason is a forty-five-inch Musky is not a trophy. Trophy Muskies are fifty inches or greater. We need to keep our law catch and release only so that the fish can grow to their full potential since our lakes are minimumly stocked. I believe our lakes have the capabilities to grow Muskies up 50" or greater.

I believe we should be focusing our efforts on stocking fish in regard to our Musky program. With Wisconsin's stocking funds being cut, I believe this would be a great time and opportunity for South Dakota to grow their Musky program. By growing our program we could attract additional tourism. The sport of Musky fishing is growing, and people are always looking for somewhere new to go. North Dakota, Iowa, and Nebraska have all done a great job stocking Muskies. There are people from across the country traveling to these three states to fish and catch Muskies. I'm not seeing much for out of state traffic on the lakes I fish in South Dakota. Musky fishermen are very good at spending money and are willing to travel to fish great fisheries.

I greatly appreciate your time and consideration of my opinion on keeping South Dakota Muskies Catch and Release only. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Brad Sheridan

Laura Anderson

Groton SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Please oppose the new 45 inch minimum. If enacted it will lessen the quality of our muskie fishing.

Jacob Cheeseman

Salem SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

The attached file is the list of 657 names on an online petition to keep catch-and-release for muskies in South Dakota.

Here is the link to the petition: ww.change.org/ProtectSDMuskie

Jacob Cheeseman

Salem SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Here is a list of comments posted on the petition to keep muskies catch and release in South Dakota.

Petition link: www.Change.org/ProtectSDMuskie

Nancy Hilding

Black Hawk SD

Position: other

Comment:

Nancy Hilding
President
Prairie Hills Audubon Society
P.O. Box 788
Black Hawk, SD 57718

We attach our comments as a PDF on your proposed delisting of the Interior Least Tern and Eskimo Curlew and changes to objectives for Osprey.

Jake Cheeseman

Salem SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

As a South Dakota musky angler, I find it astonishing that there is a proposal being pushed by SDGFP that would be a direct step backward for our muskie fishery.

SDGFP has talked about South Dakota being an “opportunity state.” When it comes to muskies, opportunity does not mean the opportunity to harvest them when we already have such limited opportunity to catch them. The opportunity for South Dakota’s muskie fishery is to grow the fishery, with zero steps backward.

There are real opportunities to move this fishery forward. Stocking Lake Oahe and increasing funding for the RAS system are examples of investments that could help build South Dakota’s muskie fishery and create more opportunities for anglers.

Nobody understands what is happening with South Dakota’s muskies better than the people who actively fish for them. We have access to the same surveys and stocking records, but we also spend countless hours on these lakes seeing firsthand what is actually there.

I think there is one thing we can all agree on: the relative abundance of muskies in South Dakota is low. But despite that low abundance, the muskies we do have grow to impressive sizes. These fish regularly reach 50 inches and beyond, and because they are protected, those same fish can be caught multiple times by different anglers over the years.

That is where the opportunity is.

The opportunity is in being able to catch these fish—not in being able to kill them.

If we remove the largest and most valuable fish from an already limited fishery, we are taking away opportunities instead of creating them. South Dakota has the chance to build something special with its muskie fishery. We should be focused on growing that opportunity, not taking a step backward.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Dear South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Commission,

The Fargo-Moorhead Chapter of Muskies, Inc. respectfully requests that the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department retain the current **catch-and-release regulation for Muskellunge**.

Muskellunge are managed as a trophy sport fish throughout much of North America. In states where harvest is allowed, minimum size limits are typically set at exceptionally high thresholds, often 50 inches or greater, in order to protect the resource and maintain opportunities for anglers to catch truly trophy-class fish. Allowing the harvest of Muskellunge over 45 inches does not align with the objective of managing these populations as trophy fisheries. Anglers who wish to commemorate the capture of a trophy fish have excellent alternatives available, including high-quality replica mounts that preserve the memory of the catch without removing the fish from the population.

Maintaining the current catch-and-release regulation allows individual Muskellunge, both males and females, to reach their maximum growth potential within South Dakota waters. As a stocked, low-density apex predator, Muskellunge populations are intentionally managed at relatively low abundance levels to provide a high-quality trophy fishery while maintaining ecological balance. Because these fish occur at low densities and require many years to reach trophy size, the loss of even a small number of mature fish can have a disproportionate impact on the quality of the fishery. The continued presence of older and larger fish also provides fisheries biologists with valuable opportunities to evaluate population health, growth rates, and long-term management success through routine monitoring and surveys.

South Dakota Muskellunge populations are already subject to substantial angling pressure due to the state's year-round fishing season and regulations that allow the use of two lines while fishing. These unique opportunities provide anglers with additional access to the resource but may also increase the potential for hooking mortality compared to fisheries with more restrictive regulations. Given these factors, maintaining the current catch-and-release approach remains a prudent conservation measure.

Furthermore, the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department has identified Muskellunge management as a high priority within its fisheries program. The Department's **2024 Northeastern Fisheries Plan** specifically identifies the need to determine survival and optimal stocking strategies for Muskellunge raised in recirculating aquaculture systems. Additionally, the plan lists **Walleye and Musky Stocking Evaluations** among its primary management priorities. While these important evaluations are ongoing, changing the harvest regulation would introduce an additional management variable that could complicate efforts to accurately assess stocking success, survival, growth, and overall population performance.

For these reasons, the Fargo-Moorhead Chapter of Muskies, Inc. believes that maintaining the current catch-and-release regulation best supports the long-term sustainability of South Dakota's Muskellunge fisheries and ensures continued opportunities for anglers to experience a high-quality trophy fishery.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to science-based fisheries management.

Respectfully,

Josh Karch, President

On behalf of the Fargo-Moorhead Chapter of Muskies, Inc.

Chapter 2

Dear GFP Commission,

I am writing this letter to ask that you oppose changing the catch and release only ruling to a 45 inch minimum for muskies.

There is nothing to gain in keeping a 45 inch muskie. Keeping and mounting a fish in that range is the equivalent to keeping and mounting a mid-20 inch walleye.

It is my opinion that the people who are in favor of lowering the minimum want them out of the lake, as they uneducatedly believe they eat walleyes. There have been numerous studies done that show that muskies do not favor walleyes compared to other fish for prey.

Others may also state they would like them for table fare/to eat. Simple answer to that is basically every lake in South Dakota has ample amounts of northern pike. Much easier to keep a limit of pike for a meal.

Others will state they would like to have one to take to the taxidermist. I have talked to numerous taxidermist who have told they will use reproduction heads/and fins on a regular muskie mount. Meaning the only thing that would be from the original fish would be the area of skin from the gill plate to the tail. It would be much better to have a reproduction mount made, as it will look just as nice, and will also last longer.

With modern electronics in fishing getting more and more advanced every year, the average angler has become very efficient at targeting and catching fish. I am a user of the modern electronics/FFS (Forward Facing Sonar) in my own boat, and I can tell you it makes targeting fish much easier than it was 5-10 years ago. This is all the more reason to continue to protect muskies vs making them more vulnerable.

I also fish Lynn Lake regularly throughout the year. It is not uncommon to see 10 boats at the landing, all from out of state, and 75% of them are on shorelines casting muskie baits. This tells me people are willing to travel to SD (and spend tourism \$) for muskie fishing.

Instead of discussing lowering the minimum on muskies, what we should be talking about is increasing the stocking and fishing opportunities for muskies in South Dakota.

Thank you for your time,

Taylor Anderson

Groton, SD

From: Jason Berning>

Sent: Sunday, July 12, 2026 9:06 AM

To: GFP Wild Info <WildInfo@state.sd.us>

Subject: [EXT] New Muskie limit proposals, bad idea!!!

I am a non-resident that lives just across the border in MN, just want to get that out of the way. However, I buy a SD fishing license every year and have for the past 20+ years 95% for the muskie fishing.

I heard about the proposed Muskie size limit being set at 45". I do not keep these fish they take a while to grow and a 45" limit will seriously hurt the fishery because these are the prime spawning age and size, if natural spawning and reproduction even occurs in the limited number of lakes in SD.

If you want to provide anglers the opportunity to catch and keep a trophy fish the size needs to be higher! Muskies grow much bigger than pike and a standard trophy sized Muskie by people who target these fish is over 50". Most places have a 54 to 58" limit if you want to keep 1, why would you allow anglers to keep smaller fish if you are trying to establish a trophy fishery?

If there is science that backs the 45" size limit not hurting the population I would love to see it!

If you want to implement the 45" size limit then increasing the number of fish stocked each year in the established lakes or stocking new lakes is almost paramount. There are only a very very small number of lakes already and if opportunity wants to be increased then make more opportunity by stocking other lakes that people can access.

If this needs to get forwarded to another department please make sure it gets to the proper person and this is a big concern for us who target these fish in the state of SD. Thank you.

Jason Berning
Wheaton, MN

From: Jeremy Zimmer>

Sent: Saturday, July 11, 2026 9:30 AM

To: GFP Wild Info <WildInfo@state.sd.us>

Subject: [EXT]

Changing the muskellunge regulations is a huge mistake!

South dakota currently is the only state with catch and release only on these fish.

Something south dakota should be proud of.

Something almost all muskie anglers want from their local states dnr, is simply letting these fish grow to the largest sized possible. High min length limit or catch and release makes this possible

Its 2026 fish replicas are better than ever, last longer, and look as good or better than the real thing. Their are plenty of walleye, panfish, pike, and other species if people want to harvest fish. Muskellunge are the least densely populated fish in the water system, if you want south dakotas muskellunge fisheries to continue to thrive in would leave the regulation alone

Another concern is its going to be the same people going back and back keeping these fish. If you must allow people to keep these fish then a 1 per year with madotory registration like Michigan does should be put in place. Going to be the same people that want to keep these fish for some odd reason continuing keeping them which will hurt the resource.

Dear GFP Commissioners,

As a lifelong South Dakota sportsman, conservationist and angler, I respectfully ask that you **vote against** the proposal to establish a **45-inch minimum size limit and a possession limit of two muskies** in South Dakota waters.

South Dakota has been a **catch-and-release-only muskie state since 2018**. At that time, the Commission chose catch-and-release regulations over a proposal that would have increased the minimum harvest length from 40 inches to 50 inches. The Commission recognized the value of protecting this limited and unique fishery, and I believe that decision remains the right one today. Please support the work and the decision of the previous commission.

The proposed 45-inch harvest regulation feels like a significant step backward in muskie management. I struggle to understand the biological justification for encouraging harvest of a species that is not commonly targeted for food. Musky fishing has experienced booming growth in popularity and increased pressure on an extremely limited resource, which means the value of these fish is increasing. Musky anglers pursue these fish for the challenge, the experience, and the opportunity to catch a trophy fish, not because they intend to harvest them.

It was interesting to note that GFP stocking reports define a true trophy muskie as a fish measuring **50 inches or greater**, while a 43-inch fish is merely considered "memorable." If the stated objective is to increase trophy opportunities, allowing harvest of fish at 45 inches appears inconsistent with what is stated in the stocking reports.

If creating more trophy opportunities is truly the priority, I would encourage GFP to consider increasing muskie stocking efforts or expanding the number of lakes/waters that support muskie populations. South Dakota currently offers very small muskie opportunities, with only 5 lakes containing established populations. Increasing abundance and habitat opportunities would seem more consistent with a trophy-management philosophy than allowing harvest of fish before they reach trophy size. I know we are not Minnesota but they have over 100 lakes that they manage for Musky.

The opportunity to catch a trophy muskie already exists under current regulations. When a trophy fish is released, that fish can be caught again, allowing multiple anglers to experience that same opportunity. Once harvested, that opportunity is gone forever.

Furthermore, modern taxidermy has essentially eliminated the need to harvest a fish to commemorate a catch. High-quality reproduction mounts can be created using photographs and measurements, preserving every detail of the fish right down to the spots, while allowing the fish to remain in the lake. For many muskie anglers, the photographs, memories, and successful release of the fish represent the true trophy.

Muskies are also a slow-growing species. It can take well over a decade for a fish to reach trophy size. Allowing harvest at 45 inches removes fish that are approaching their peak potential before they have the opportunity to reach the 50-inch benchmark that GFP itself identifies as trophy class.

Staff have presented this proposal as a way to provide trophy opportunities, yet most muskie anglers would agree that a true trophy muskie is generally considered a fish measuring **50 inches or larger**. The current catch-and-release regulation provides the greatest opportunity for those fish to survive, grow, and be caught by future anglers.

It is also worth noting that neighboring states with nationally recognized trophy muskie fisheries employ far more restrictive harvest regulations. Minnesota, for example, utilizes a **54-inch minimum length limit** on not all, but many of its premier muskie waters.

The Department prides itself on customer service because it's the foundation of who they are as a department. The angler is the customer and we are asking the commission to ensure customer service is provided. It should be known that a petition has been circulated to gain support, and at the time of this letter has collected more than 380 signatures opposing the new regulations. That number should grow by the time of the Commission meeting in Winner (Sept. 10). Side note - The SD deer population is managed by landowner tolerance in addition to biology. We are asking for some angler tolerance also be included in the decision.

It is for all the reasons described above, I respectfully urge the Commission to maintain South Dakota's current catch-and-release-only muskie regulation and vote against the proposed 45-inch harvest rule.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and commitment to South Dakota's fisheries resources.

Sincerely,

Scott Vander Meulen,

Sioux Falls, SD

change.org

Protect South Dakota's Trophy Muskie Fishery — Keep Catch-and-Release

Name	Location	Commented Date	Comment
Aaron VanMoer	Milroy, MN	2026-07-31	Muskies over 45" are the target size and species for my trips made from MN to SD. Catch and release of muskies is a proven successful way to enhance the experience of the fisheries. If there's no goal to achieve upper 40" fish in South Dakota, the GFP should focus instead on trophy pike waters in my opinion.
Jacob Osmond	Aurora, IL	2026-07-31	The economic boost of having strong trophy musky populations is incredible. Me and many many others travel to many different states in the search for a trophy. By having a sustainable population, you encourage more fisherman to come to the area, helping local economies flourish. Take Northern Wisconsin for example, many small towns have built their entire economy solely off of musky fishing.
Trent Alexander	Waterloo, NE	2026-08-01	Younger angler here and being able to catch big fish over the 45 mark is what makes the sport so special. If you allow people to harvest these fish then that won't be something young anglers can do.

Name	Location	Commented Date	Comment
Paul Stoffel	Mankato, MN	2026-08-04	Allowing the harvest of musky over any certain length does nothing to help a fishery or a community. It is both detrimental to the fishery and the economic benefits of a community to remove trophy fish from the fishery. No one needs to harvest a musky to put food on the table anymore. And if they do, there are a lot of easier to catch and better tasting fish to harvest instead of a musky! No one needs a skin mount of their "incredible catch" anymore to have hanging on their wall... just so their kids or grandkids can throw it in the garbage 20 years later because it looks terrible and no one wants it anymore. It's time for our leaders to wake up and realize that these fish are worth much more alive than they are dead.
Nick Marra	Lemont, United States	2026-08-06	Muskies over 45" are the target size and species for my trips made from MN to SD. Catch and release of muskies is a proven successful way to enhance the experience of the fisheries. If there's no goal to achieve upper 40" fish in South Dakota, the GFP should focus instead on trophy pike waters in my opinion.
Jordan Johnson	Chisholm, MN	2026-08-10	Save the muskys!!

Name	Location	Commented Date	Comment
Kel Stroud	Abilene, KS	2026-08-13	South Dakota's muskies are a fragile, limited resource that deserve to be protected—not harvested once they reach 45 inches. These fish are stocked, there is no documented natural reproduction, and we only have a handful of musky waters in the entire state. The large muskies being caught are especially valuable to the fishery. There is simply no positive biological benefit to removing a trophy musky. Keeping South Dakota's muskies catch-and-release is the best way to protect this unique fishery for future generations. I will no longer be interested in going to South Dakota to musky fish if they're being harvested.
Pat Karpinski	Chicago, IL	2026-09-01	Muskies take a really long time to get to 45 in and allowing harvest to take place at that point is not giving those fish the chance to grow to their stocking potential which is sometimes well over 50 inches. In that amount of time several anglers can catch that fish and with catch and release it happens all the time. There really is no reason to harvest any muskies let alone any muskies that are 45 in or bigger it's easy nowadays to get a replica Mount made.
Greg Kvale	Baxter, MN	2026-09-03	Muskies are a very low density fish that need full catch and release protection or the population will eventually crash due to greedy fishers who think they need to kill and physically possess something to be real. Catch and release in South Dakota is working well now. Keep the regulation and protect the resource.

Name	Location	Commented Date	Comment
James Ashton	Chesterfield, MO	2026-09-06	On behalf of Muskies, Inc. (MI), a 501(c)(3) muskie fishing organization founded in 1969 and now celebrating its 60th year, I respectfully urge the SDGFP Commission to maintain catch-and-release regulations for all muskies, regardless of size. MI represents more than 6,000 men, women, and family members through 55 chapters across 13 states. For decades, our members have practiced CPR—Catch, Photo, Release—as a core conservation ethic that helps protect and sustain muskie populations. Through MI's Lunge Log, a member service for registering catches, more than 485,000 muskies have been reported as successfully released. Requiring catch and release remains one of the most effective ways to support healthy future muskie populations while preserving the opportunity for anglers of all ages and backgrounds to experience the sport, including the memorable process of catching, netting, photographing, and releasing these remarkable fish. This approach reflects responsible stewardship of a valued public resource and should continue as sound conservation policy. I plan to attend the meeting on Tuesday, 9/10 at 1:00 PM. James Ashton President, Muskies, Inc Wildwood, MO 314-368-8927 Jim_ashton@aol.com

change.org

Protect South Dakota's Trophy Muskie Fishery — Keep Catch-and-Release

Name	Location	Signed On
Jake Cheeseman	United States	2026-07-30
Gabriel Grant	Tea, SD	2026-07-30
TANNER BOUCHARD	Milford, IA	2026-07-30
Ethan Millard	Milford, IA	2026-07-30
Matt Ahrenholtz	Carroll, IA	2026-07-30
Aaron Stack	Milwaukee, WI	2026-07-30
Dominick Foley	Minneapolis, MN	2026-07-30
Philip DeMuth	Omaha, NE	2026-07-30
Cory Woods	Omaha, IA	2026-07-30
Joe Anderson	Spirit Lake, IA	2026-07-30
Trent Swanson	Garretson, SD	2026-07-30
Kyle peterson	Spirit Lake, IA	2026-07-30
Fighter Pilot	Honolulu, HI	2026-07-30
Kate Murack	conrad, MT	2026-07-31
Craig cheeseman	Salem, SD	2026-07-31
Koltan Lindstrom	Salem, SD	2026-07-31
Troy Erickson	Salem, SD	2026-07-31
Zachary Ruiz	Omaha, NE	2026-07-31
Raygen Randall	Lake Norden, SD	2026-07-31
Kane muth	Omaha, NE	2026-07-31
Jason Rye	Irene, SD	2026-07-31

Name	Location	Signed On
Peyton Cleveland	Montrose, SD	2026-07-31
Peyton Smith	Lake Norden, SD	2026-07-31
Jacob Wagner	Houston, TX	2026-07-31
Riley McGinnis	Mitchell, SD	2026-07-31
Mitch Grant	Tea, SD	2026-07-31
Isaac Anderson	Salem, SD	2026-07-31
Zachary Witte	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-07-31
Easton prins	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-07-31
Brayden Witte	sioux falls, SD	2026-07-31
Brent Witte	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-07-31
Lincoln prins	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-07-31
Jase Muller	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-07-31
Devon Berning	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-07-31
Spencer Koelewyn	Elkhorn, NE	2026-07-31
Jazzmyn Witte	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-07-31
Nash Colberg	WATERTOWN, SD	2026-07-31
Austin Heibult	sioux falls, SD	2026-07-31
Nate hardie	Maple Grove, MN	2026-07-31
Sawyer prins	Iowa City, IA	2026-07-31
Ryan Moyes	Edwardsville, IL	2026-07-31
Aaron VanMoer	Milroy, MN	2026-07-31

Name	Location	Signed On
Kemal Zuko	St louis, MO	2026-07-31
Justin Birch	Grand Rapids, MN	2026-07-31
John Kalenze	West Fargo, ND	2026-07-31
Mark Michalski	Eau Claire, WI	2026-07-31
Thomas Bullert	Brownton, MN	2026-07-31
Jon Best	Minneapolis, MN	2026-07-31
Darren Nixon	Crystal Lake, IL	2026-07-31
Mike Bennewitz	Saint Cloud, MN	2026-07-31
Joel Blessing	Port St Joe, FL	2026-07-31
Amanda monge	wrenshall, MN	2026-07-31
Nick Mohs	Minneapolis, MN	2026-07-31
Rick Wolff	Stacy, MN	2026-07-31
samuel ries	St Louis, MO	2026-07-31
brandon guimont	Saint Francis, MN	2026-07-31
Jason Kahler	Superior, WI	2026-07-31
Michael Janowski	Stevens Point, WI	2026-07-31
Alex Stevens	Minneapolis, MN	2026-07-31
Jacob Osmond	Rochelle, IL	2026-07-31
Tim Norris	Bemidji, MN	2026-07-31
Jaron Harthoorn	Bloomington, MN	2026-07-31
Pete Bibelhausen	Minneapolis, MN	2026-07-31

Name	Location	Signed On
Dustin Anderson	Minneapolis, MN	2026-07-31
Mitchell Zorn	Mound, MN	2026-07-31
Ryan becker	clear lake, IA	2026-07-31
Griffin stoffel	salem, SD	2026-07-31
Jordan Kurkowski	Fond du Lac, WI	2026-07-31
Mike LoPresti	Elgin, IL	2026-07-31
Ryan Lahman	Aldrich, MN	2026-07-31
Ben Linnell	Laramie, WY	2026-07-31
John Smallman	Conover, WI	2026-07-31
Aurora Kramer	Iowa, IA	2026-07-31
Zach Obler	Lindstrom, MN	2026-07-31
Valerie Lopresti	Chicago, IL	2026-07-31
Pearson Jack	Lake geneva, WI	2026-07-31
Brady Mudder	Alexandria, SD	2026-07-31
Zach Emslander	Fargo, ND	2026-07-31
Judy Cheeseman	Mitchell, SD	2026-07-31
Greg Wilson	Arbor Vitae, WI	2026-07-31
Miranda Painter	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-07-31
Sonny Larson	Canton, SD	2026-07-31
Jack Rasmussen	Salem, SD	2026-07-31
Billy Aasheim	Canton, SD	2026-07-31

Name	Location	Signed On
Brent Hirsch	Minnetonka, MN	2026-07-31
Braxton Bolton	Roosevelt, UT	2026-07-31
Garrett Miles	Vermillion, SD	2026-07-31
Jackson grady	Salem, SD	2026-07-31
James Folkens	Canton, SD	2026-07-31
Michael Desouto	Fond du lac, WI	2026-07-31
Dan Work	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-07-31
James Tucker	Spirit Lake, IA	2026-07-31
Nate Damian	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-08-01
Tayeton Lohaus	Humboldt, IA	2026-08-01
Marlene Aasheim	Canton, SD	2026-08-01
John Swenson	Denver, CO	2026-08-01
Andrew Ferris	Wall, SD	2026-08-01
Alyssa Persson	Medford, MA	2026-08-01
Christina LoPresti	O'Fallon, MO	2026-08-01
Dan Waldman	Aberdeen, SD	2026-08-01
Matt Elioff	Robbinsdale, MN	2026-08-01
Neil Schneider	Watertown, SD	2026-08-01
Brent Schneider	Turton, SD	2026-08-01
Brad Sheridan	Aberdeen, SD	2026-08-01
Jan Persson	Alexandria, SD	2026-08-01

Name	Location	Signed On
Darwyn Persson	Alexandria, SD	2026-08-01
Bill Barnett	Groton, SD	2026-08-01
Nicole Henjum	Conde, SD	2026-08-01
Marshal Leifheit	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-08-01
Kendra mudder	Alexandria, SD	2026-08-01
Bill Blackman	Lyons, SD	2026-08-01
Trey Persson	Washington, DC	2026-08-01
Emma Schneider	Turton, SD	2026-08-01
Brett Kellner	Sisseton, SD	2026-08-01
Jack Suhai	Minneapolis, MN	2026-08-01
Kynedi Hoglund	Dell Rapids, SD	2026-08-01
Travis cheeseman	Alexandria, SD	2026-08-01
Levi Miller	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-08-01
Peter Nester	Hartford, SD	2026-08-01
Isaiah draeger	Minneapolis, MN	2026-08-01
Paige Hickson	Conover, WI	2026-08-01
Landon Hill	Rice lake, WI	2026-08-01
Sheri Murtaugh	Guntersville, AL	2026-08-01
Skyler Leonard	Correctionville, IA	2026-08-01
Justin Balcome	Carlos, MN	2026-08-01
Patricia Tribitt	Revillo, SD	2026-08-01

Name	Location	Signed On
Jeremiah Wiersma	Castlewood, SD	2026-08-01
Nathan Miller	Houghton, SD	2026-08-01
Joey gillis	Stevens Point, WI	2026-08-01
Steve Mehlbrech	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-08-01
Felix Rodriguez	Mitchell, SD	2026-08-01
Trevor Wilkinson	Mitchell, SD	2026-08-01
Dylan Klinkhammer	Salem, SD	2026-08-01
Chris Marquardt	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-08-01
Tyler Earls	Mitchell, SD	2026-08-01
Cameron Paul	Mitchell, SD	2026-08-01
Patrick Lauseng	Minneapolis, MN	2026-08-01
Trent alexander	Waterloo, NE	2026-08-01
GREG BODEN	Huntsville, Canada	2026-08-01
Cole Cheeseman	Hartford, SD	2026-08-01
Matthew deflosse	Cheyenne, WY	2026-08-01
Zach Branson	Brookings, SD	2026-08-01
Jeremy Grady	Salem, SD	2026-08-01
Jacob Rehnstrom	Watertown, SD	2026-08-01
Avery Feterl	Omaha, NE	2026-08-01
Cody Lofswold	Crooks, SD	2026-08-01
Matt Stotts	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-08-01

Name	Location	Signed On
Megan steinmetz	Hayward, WI	2026-08-02
Ridgley Skidmore	Willow Grove, PA	2026-08-02
Kevin Lanners	Mitchell, SD	2026-08-02
Mike Milburn	Austin, TX	2026-08-02
Davis groneberg	Wheaton, MN	2026-08-02
Jacob Egeland	Mayville, ND	2026-08-02
Zachary Pawlowski	Alcester, SD	2026-08-02
Nick Mauris	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-08-02
Ashley Pawlowski	Alcester, SD	2026-08-02
Jeremy Nelson	Aberdeen, SD	2026-08-02
Carmen Vreugdenhil	Spink township, SD	2026-08-02
Mike Hluchy	Aberdeen, TX	2026-08-02
Ben Johnson	Saint Paul, MN	2026-08-02
Anna Quinn	Hastings, MN	2026-08-02
Jamie Risovi	New Rockford, ND	2026-08-02
Dave Warner	Alcester, SD	2026-08-02
Ronnie Pelke	Tea, SD	2026-08-02
Josh Perleberg	Buchanan, ND	2026-08-02
Andrew Grette	Meridian, ID	2026-08-02
Josh Zenner	Saint Paul, MN	2026-08-02
Michelle Pfeiffer	New Rockford, ND	2026-08-02

Name	Location	Signed On
Barb granger	New Rockford, ND	2026-08-02
Dean Johs	Bismarck, ND	2026-08-02
Ethan boettcher	Minneapolis, MN	2026-08-02
Roger Heintzman	Aberdeen, SD	2026-08-02
Zac Miedema	Cherokee, IA	2026-08-03
Nick heying	Richmond, MN	2026-08-03
Jason Ertelt	Harwood, MN	2026-08-03
Steven McAtee	Saint John, ND	2026-08-03
William Ryan	Oklahoma City, OK	2026-08-03
Debra Cheeseman	Salem, SD	2026-08-03
Marlene Lorenz	Omaha, NE	2026-08-03
Amy lofswold	crooks, SD	2026-08-03
Jack Munsterteiger	Minneapolis, MN	2026-08-04
Bill Marquardt	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-08-04
Christian Thury	Bemidji, MN	2026-08-04
Chad Bigge	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-08-04
Alexander McLean	Bemidji, MN	2026-08-04
Paul Stoffel	Mankato, MN	2026-08-04
BRIAN ROTHBAUER	Elkhart, IN	2026-08-04
Josh Holden	Caledonia, WI	2026-08-04
Nick Poppler	White bear lake, MN	2026-08-04

Name	Location	Signed On
Marissa Cheeseman	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-08-04
Aidan Bouman	Minneapolis, MN	2026-08-04
Joe McNamara	Buffalo, MN	2026-08-04
Laura Marquardt	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-08-04
John McNamara	Minneapolis, MN	2026-08-04
Micah Dove	Minneapolis, MN	2026-08-04
Alec Langerud	Minneapolis, MN	2026-08-04
Adam Manz	Park Rapids, MN	2026-08-04
Tom Wartman	Glenwood, MN	2026-08-04
Parker Scheier	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-08-04
Rylee klinkhammer	Flandreau, SD	2026-08-04
Peanut Arbuckle	Westlake Village, CA	2026-08-04
Cody Jackson	Watertown, SD	2026-08-05
Cade Entwisle	Edina, MN	2026-08-05
Ben Olsen	Mound, IN	2026-08-05
Brendan Webb	Eau Claire, WI	2026-08-05
Martin Flood	Salem, SD	2026-08-05
Chad Mckenzie	Canton, SD	2026-08-05
Charles McKenzie	Canton, SD	2026-08-05
Jill Reber	Minneapolis, MN	2026-08-06
Steve Arbogast	Watertown, SD	2026-08-06

Name	Location	Signed On
Brad Luedtke	Menomonie, WI	2026-08-06
Louis Cook	Sauk Rapids, MN	2026-08-06
Randy Soma	Fort Pierre, SD	2026-08-06
Brandon Haines	Albuquerque, NM	2026-08-06
Spencer Biermann	Peever, SD	2026-08-06
Quintin biermann	Groton, SD	2026-08-06
Jamie Olsen	Dakota Dunes, SD	2026-08-06
Kevin Cochran	Bemidji, MN	2026-08-06
Dave Jann	Rice Lake, WI	2026-08-06
shawn haley	Milford, IA	2026-08-06
CHRIS JENSEN	Big Lake, MN	2026-08-06
John Newman	Saint Paul, MN	2026-08-06
Nick Marra	Lemont, United States	2026-08-06
Brandon Norten	Blaine, MN	2026-08-06
Brian Grote	Sabin, MN	2026-08-06
Jon Jacobson	Fargo, ND	2026-08-06
Jesse Wondra	Saint Paul, MN	2026-08-06
nathan speltz	Plainview, MN	2026-08-06
Joshua Crownover	Harrisburg, SD	2026-08-06
Courtney Tiesler	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-08-06
Taylor Crownover	Harrisburg, SD	2026-08-06

Name	Location	Signed On
Steve Smith	watertown, MN	2026-08-07
Candice Crownover	Tyndall, SD	2026-08-07
Isaac Crownover	Yankton, SD	2026-08-07
Mike Riffle	Valparaiso, IN	2026-08-07
Karl Steege	Volga, SD	2026-08-07
Helen Leuthner	Lake Grove, NY	2026-08-07
Anthony Frederiksen	Arlington, SD	2026-08-07
Jason Kumpf	Aberdeen, SD	2026-08-07
James Davel	Clintonville, WI	2026-08-07
Taylor Wilson	Brookings, SD	2026-08-07
Karen Klauseger	Lemont, IL	2026-08-07
Andrea Tanner	Madison, SD	2026-08-07
Melinda Kinnaird	Hot Springs National Park, AR	2026-08-07
Dolores Mauloff	Chicago, IL	2026-08-07
Kirk Steege	Volga,, SD	2026-08-07
Louis A. Esposito	Brooklyn, NY	2026-08-07
Jesse Fuher	Aberdeen, SD	2026-08-07
Jennifer Higgins	Marengo, OH	2026-08-07
Patrick Strohkirch	Mukwonago, WI	2026-08-07
Ronald Collamore	Lincoln, NE	2026-08-07
Mika Vornanen	Finland	2026-08-07

Name	Location	Signed On
Mario Maritato	Pleasant Prairie, WI	2026-08-07
Albert San Miguel	Bakersfield, CA	2026-08-07
Terri Rimmer	United States	2026-08-07
KAREN DAVALLE	Auburn, WA	2026-08-07
K Hansen	Minneapolis, MN	2026-08-07
Malinda barsch	Austin, TX	2026-08-07
Scott Oppenheimer	arvada, CO	2026-08-07
NANCY MCLAUGHLIN	Naples, FL	2026-08-07
Jason Vollmer	Montrose, SD	2026-08-07
Maurice Vaughan	Greenville, NC	2026-08-07
Jeri Williams	Taylors, SC	2026-08-08
Mark Kenny	Kenosha, WI	2026-08-08
Annitta Stroh	OLDHAM, SD	2026-08-08
Elizabeth Melo	Orlando, FL	2026-08-08
George Bourlotos	Dover, NJ	2026-08-08
Jacob Darling	Kirksville, MO	2026-08-08
John Lembo	Corpus Christi, TX	2026-08-08
Jason Seidner	Milwaukee, WI	2026-08-08
Jeanine Smegal	Brooklyn Park, MN	2026-08-08
Michael Gonzalez	Newtown, CT	2026-08-08
Sarah Walling	Castleton On Hudson, NY	2026-08-09

Name	Location	Signed On
Mark Kewan	Menomonee Falls, WI	2026-08-09
Travis Hultgren	Stillwater, MN	2026-08-09
Bryan Thompson	Minnetonka, MN	2026-08-09
Bob Piazzq	Hilton, NY	2026-08-09
Bill Buchholz	Greenville, WI	2026-08-09
Jesse langner	bozeman, MT	2026-08-09
Bill Schnauffer	Chardon, OH	2026-08-09
Jack moga	Cleveland, OH	2026-08-09
James Glampe	Phillips, WI	2026-08-09
Dave Kallal	Arlington Heights, IL	2026-08-09
Brett Waldera	West Fargo, ND	2026-08-09
Edward Keller	Aberdeen, SD	2026-08-09
Rick Shea	Clear Lake, SD	2026-08-09
Daniel Morrow	Minneapolis, MN	2026-08-09
Blake anderson	Groton, SD	2026-08-09
Ann J Sheridan	Groton, SD	2026-08-09
Steve Lemieux	Aberdeen, SD	2026-08-09
Skyler Geffre	Aberdeen, SD	2026-08-09
Jim Gilles	Fond du Lac, WI	2026-08-09
Jason Berning	wheaton, MN	2026-08-09
Tim Tveter	Riverdale, ND	2026-08-09

Name	Location	Signed On
Michael Woods	Aberdeen, SD	2026-08-09
Nicholas Golz	Aberdeen, SD	2026-08-09
Brian Pauley	Stone Lake, WI	2026-08-10
Jon Inwood	Brooklyn, NY	2026-08-10
Doug wegner	Toronto, WI	2026-08-10
Charlie Quilico	Schaumburg, IL	2026-08-10
Gavin wright	Cobourg, Canada	2026-08-10
DANIEL EDWARDS	Hankinson, ND	2026-08-10
Kysen Howard	Overland park, KS	2026-08-10
Ryan Novak	Huntley, IL	2026-08-10
Filippo De Frenza	Barrington, IL	2026-08-10
Tate VanLaecken	Tea, SD	2026-08-10
Jaren Ruble	Des Moines, IA	2026-08-10
Carter Boros	Manhattan, IL	2026-08-10
David Nielsen	Le Mars, IA	2026-08-10
Kevin Grote	North Branch, MN	2026-08-10
Camden Droppo	Brainerd, MN	2026-08-10
Hans Klopp	Watertown, SD	2026-08-10
Jeremy baird	trafalgar, IN	2026-08-10
Jordan Johnson	Angle Inlet, MN	2026-08-10
Kyle Sorensen	Hayward, WI	2026-08-10

Name	Location	Signed On
christine warburton	Minneapolis, MN	2026-08-10
Duane Kortman	Stafford, VA	2026-08-10
Hannah Funk	Minneapolis, MN	2026-08-10
Erica Richardson	Minneapolis, MN	2026-08-10
JoeBobsBass Perry	Minneapolis, MN	2026-08-10
Jacob VanBeusekom	Delano, MN	2026-08-10
Ethan lem	Stouffville, Canada	2026-08-10
Rex Lapka	Schaumburg, IL	2026-08-10
Cale Brakke	Minneapolis, MN	2026-08-11
Chris halverson	Angle inlet, MN	2026-08-11
Taylor Anderson	Groton, SD	2026-08-11
Christian McHugh	Mound City, SD	2026-08-11
Nick Grant	Tea, SD	2026-08-11
Cassie Yount	Madison, SD	2026-08-11
Garrett larson	eagan, MN	2026-08-11
Austin swan	Elko Newmarket, MN	2026-08-11
Kyra Seib	saskatoon, Canada	2026-08-11
Joshua Berryann	Bloomington, MN	2026-08-11
Jonathan Brown	Brandon, SD	2026-08-11
James Holm	Warner, SD	2026-08-11
makayla muchow	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-08-11

Name	Location	Signed On
Grant DeHaai	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-08-11
Louis Bailly	Hartford, SD	2026-08-11
Jessica Gardner	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-08-11
Wendell Niewenhuis	Aberdeen, SD	2026-08-12
Will Kliber	Fargo, ND	2026-08-12
Dominic Johnson	Minneapolis, MN	2026-08-12
Jacob Guzowski	Metamora, MI	2026-08-12
Kirby Budrow	Grand Rapids, MN	2026-08-12
Carl Buehrer	dekalb, IL	2026-08-12
Sam blaschke	Luverne, MN	2026-08-12
Jeremy Paulsen	Neenah, WI	2026-08-12
Craig Margulies	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-08-12
Carter Borchardt	Watertown, NE	2026-08-12
Jordan Dvorak	Renner, SD	2026-08-13
Mike Dorris	Madison, SD	2026-08-13
Judah Wright	Dell Rapids, SD	2026-08-13
Kel Stroud	Abilene, KS	2026-08-13
Garrett Voegele	Watertown, SD	2026-08-13
Jordan Pratt	Desmet, SD	2026-08-13
Robert Adjemian	Slinger, WI	2026-08-13
Eli Hofer	Huron, SD	2026-08-13

Name	Location	Signed On
Connor Singrey	Mitchell, SD	2026-08-13
Jared Feiner	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-08-13
Kelvin Lawrence	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-08-13
Jeff Smith	Hartford, SD	2026-08-13
Derick Berhow	Monticello, MN	2026-08-13
Clint Hay	Brookings, SD	2026-08-13
Jeremy Dorris	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-08-13
Randy Pearson	Carney, MI	2026-08-13
Taylor Alexander	South da, NY	2026-08-13
Jaron anderson	Brookings, SD	2026-08-13
Dylan Geraets	madison, SD	2026-08-13
Greg Koehn	Colman, SD	2026-08-13
Benjamin Kruse	Omaha, NE	2026-08-13
Bruce Carter	Watertown, SD	2026-08-13
Rusty Roland	Chamberlain, SD	2026-08-13
Brad Knight	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-08-13
Casey Baumgarn	Webster, SD	2026-08-13
Edward Markushewski	Huntsville, AL	2026-08-13
Tim Teeslink	Rapid City, SD	2026-08-13
Michael Knudson	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-08-13
JASON HIGGINS	Isle, MN	2026-08-13

Name	Location	Signed On
Chad Cadwell	Mitchell, SD	2026-08-13
Curtis Sager	Carver, MN	2026-08-13
DUANE LANDMEIER	Hinckley, IL	2026-08-13
Travis Noon	Minneapolis, MN	2026-08-14
WILLIAM CROWE	Atlanta, GA	2026-08-14
Matthew wirth	Beloit, WI	2026-08-14
Dian Price	Waterford, United States	2026-08-14
Donald Frisch	Earlville, IL	2026-08-15
Jack Steinberg	Tampa, FL	2026-08-16
Grace Osman	Allentown, PA	2026-08-16
Kayden verley	Canton, SD	2026-08-17
Thomas Ardolf	Waite Park, MN	2026-08-19
Adam Schoolmeesters	Litchfield, MN	2026-08-21
Chris Paye	Big Lake, MN	2026-08-21
Doug Verley	Canton, SD	2026-08-21
Jakob Schultz	Pierre, SD	2026-08-22
Isaac McCormick	Salem, SD	2026-08-22
Mollee Grams	Omaha, NE	2026-08-22
Jonah walden	Omaha, NE	2026-08-22
Braeden Kerkhove	Salem, SD	2026-08-23
Eric Poissant	Avon, MN	2026-08-24

Name	Location	Signed On
Joseph Brown	delano, MN	2026-08-25
Donald Myers	Ankeny, IA	2026-08-25
Ethan Brown	Brandon, SD	2026-08-25
John Sickel	Chicago, IL	2026-08-26
James Kutschenreuter	Ripon, WI	2026-08-26
David Joppru	Minneapolis, MN	2026-08-26
Bill Becker	Marshfield, WI	2026-08-26
Kent Sharp	Indianapolis, IN	2026-08-26
John House	Minneapolis, MN	2026-08-26
Craig Thomton	Wheaton, IL	2026-08-26
Paul Szalajka	Orland Park, IL	2026-08-27
Alvin Vollmer	Saint Mary's, PA	2026-08-27
Tom Pollack	Wausau, WI	2026-08-27
Bruce Johnson	Cherokee, IA	2026-08-27
Parker Randall	Salem, SD	2026-08-27
Karla Brown	Brandon, SD	2026-08-27
Chad Gates	Fall Creek, WI	2026-08-27
Mckenzie Van beek	Campbellsport, WI	2026-08-27
Matthew Cheney	Milton Wisconsin, WI	2026-08-27
Josh Rauls	Green Bay, WI	2026-08-27
Sam Soholt	Fargo, ND	2026-08-27

Name	Location	Signed On
Sylvia Longacre	Chetek, WI	2026-08-27
Pete Maina	Hayward, WI	2026-08-27
Terry Schoer	Duluth, MN	2026-08-27
Keegan McIntosh	Hastings, MN	2026-08-27
Mark Kruckenberg	Edgerton, WI	2026-08-27
terrance neuman	Beaver dam. Wis, WI	2026-08-27
Alyssa Brown	Brandon, SD	2026-08-27
Sunny Simeone	Lisle, IL	2026-08-27
Bob Zimmer	Mukwonago, WI	2026-08-27
Steven Brown	Sherwood, OR	2026-08-27
john underhill	Preston, MN	2026-08-28
Edward McPeak	Lexington, KY	2026-08-28
Christopher Riha	Inver Grove Heights, MN	2026-08-28
Jeff Gontarek	Underwood, MN	2026-08-28
Jason Mitchell	Devils Lake, ND	2026-08-28
Ethan Aschenbrenner	Omaha, NE	2026-08-28
Phil Flynn	Byers, CO	2026-08-28
Thomas Nelson	Granton, WI	2026-08-28
Michael Dallager	Webster, SD	2026-08-28
Michael Keown	Eau Claire, WI	2026-08-28
Jason Jacobs	Saint Cloud, MN	2026-08-28

Name	Location	Signed On
Isaac chase	Salem, SD	2026-08-28
Ryan Hollar	Rochester, MN	2026-08-28
Bryan boltjes	Fairmont, MN	2026-08-28
Gavin Gordon	Hartford, SD	2026-08-28
Casey Friskney	White Bear Lake, MN	2026-08-28
Tyler Cleveland	Salem, SD	2026-08-28
Owen Alley	Salem, SD	2026-08-28
Vivian Koepsell	Salem, SD	2026-08-28
Jason Obler	Minneapolis, MN	2026-08-28
Josh Borovsky	Maple Grove, MN	2026-08-28
Karter Moody	Bozeman, MT	2026-08-28
josh rabska	Chippewa Falls, WI	2026-08-28
Taylor Bouchard	Treynor, IA	2026-08-28
Janine Kipp	Montrose, SD	2026-08-28
TROY schmeling	sioux falls, SD	2026-08-28
Joe Thody	Groton, SD	2026-08-28
Kurt Schaunaman	Tea, SD	2026-08-28
Hunter Rowbotham	Brookings, SD	2026-08-29
Trent Stanton	West Fargo, ND	2026-08-29
Aaron Heimkes	Pequot Lakes, MN	2026-08-29
Jeffrey Olson	Rapid City, SD	2026-08-31

Name	Location	Signed On
Fred Walker	Cook, MN	2026-08-31
Austin Olsby	Minneapolis, MN	2026-09-01
Ryan walker	Toronto, Canada	2026-09-01
Sean Grefe	Cold Spring, MN	2026-09-01
Matt Peterson	Minneapolis, MN	2026-09-01
Pat Karpinski	Chicago, IL	2026-09-01
Aaron Christianson	Tyler, MN	2026-09-01
Laurie Georgeson	Baldwin, WI	2026-09-01
Dave Griffin	Montrose, MN	2026-09-01
Nick Schlichting	Davenport, IA	2026-09-01
Michael Plog	Saint Bonifacius, MN	2026-09-01
Gus Mantey	Eagle River, WI	2026-09-01
Joshua Hawke	Eagan, MN	2026-09-01
kevin Rortvedt	Plymouth, WI	2026-09-01
CONOR BRODERICK	Chicago, IL	2026-09-01
Parker Warren	Springfield, IL	2026-09-01
Ben Tollefson	Delano, MN	2026-09-01
Walter Anderson	Lakeville, MN	2026-09-01
Ryan Sather	Dawson, MN	2026-09-01
Brandon Kypreos	Farmington, MN	2026-09-01
Bob Cosgrove	Chicago, IL	2026-09-01

Name	Location	Signed On
Chris Grems	Mayer, MN	2026-09-01
Shaine Swenson	Regina, Canada	2026-09-01
Jason Wegwerth	Minneapolis, MN	2026-09-01
Tracy Crail	Eagle Grove, IA	2026-09-01
Levi Redding	Fargo, ND	2026-09-01
Tucker Swanson	Wayzata, MN	2026-09-01
Eric Kammerer	Plymouth, WI	2026-09-01
Hudsen Brandt	Lonsdale, MN	2026-09-01
Chris Cochran	White Bear Lk, MN	2026-09-01
Bowen Brandt	Minneapolis, MN	2026-09-01
Doug Johnson	Warroad, MN	2026-09-01
Paul Hartman	Minneapolis, MN	2026-09-01
Holly peterson	Aberdeen, SD	2026-09-01
Robert Kish	Indiana, PA	2026-09-01
Michael Kosak	Alexandria, MN	2026-09-01
Brock Belik	Orchard, NE	2026-09-01
Jackson jovanovich	Becker, MN	2026-09-01
Nick Johnson	Big Lake, MN	2026-09-01
Charlie Ridgway	Des Moines, IA	2026-09-01
Braxton steidl	Carlos, MN	2026-09-01
Dylan Woodworth	Midlothian, IL	2026-09-01

Name	Location	Signed On
Nick Konz	Saint Cloud, MN	2026-09-02
Kasey Cropper	Rush City, MN	2026-09-02
Jeremy Zimmerer	Kearney, NE	2026-09-02
Nicholas Schumacher	Chilton, WI	2026-09-02
Garren Kelly	Kasson, MN	2026-09-02
David Perreault	Pine City, MN	2026-09-02
Phil Wood	Clinton, IL	2026-09-02
Mike Weister	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-09-02
Dan Vanderhoff	Forest Lake, MN	2026-09-02
Seth Lubbers	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-09-02
Bryan Lipp	Brookings, SD	2026-09-02
David Halpate	Becker, MN	2026-09-02
Ashley Kirsch	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-09-02
Ryan Sexton	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-09-02
Tim fischer	Isanti, MN	2026-09-02
Griffin Smith	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-09-02
Zachary Schumacher	Kenosha, WI	2026-09-02
Deacon Duffey	lakeville, MN	2026-09-02
Haden Sadd	Kearney, NE	2026-09-02
Cole Brenden	Watertown, SD	2026-09-02
Jody Marler	Livingston, MT	2026-09-02

Name	Location	Signed On
Eric Reisenweber	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-09-02
Rylan Iangeland	Yankton, SD	2026-09-02
Cathy Wien	Kalamazo, MI	2026-09-02
Darla Boyer	Osakis, MN	2026-09-02
Jamie Wirkus-Rayman	Salem, SD	2026-09-02
Matt McCann	Randolph, NJ	2026-09-02
Travis Braun	Glenwood, MN	2026-09-02
Mitch Rayman	Salem, SD	2026-09-02
Cynthia Allen	Lawre, GA	2026-09-02
Kari Colleen	Pillager, MN	2026-09-02
Justin Sharer	St Cloud, MN	2026-09-03
Kurt Gutormson	Brookings, SD	2026-09-03
Keegan Schroeder	Seymour, WI	2026-09-03
Matt Lehto	Ashland, WI	2026-09-03
Greg Kvale	Minneapolis, MN	2026-09-03
Ryan Simpson	Indianapolis, IN	2026-09-03
THOMAS WAGNER	Perrysburg, OH	2026-09-03
Joe Grupa	Duluth, MN	2026-09-03
Cole Jackson	Bemidji, MN	2026-09-03
Gary Mattson	CROSBY, MN	2026-09-03
DENIS VISCEK	Lenexa, KS	2026-09-03

Name	Location	Signed On
matt dixon	state college, PA	2026-09-03
Rhonda Deinert	Mitchell, SD	2026-09-03
Jordan Sinkler	Crystal, MN	2026-09-03
John Russell	St. Peter Beach, FL	2026-09-03
Jake pennig	Roseville, MN	2026-09-03
Jeremy Huhnstock	Wahpeton, ND	2026-09-03
RANDY MULCAHEY	Waseca, MN	2026-09-03
Tom Dietz	Breezy Point, MN	2026-09-03
Todd Greatens	Nisswa, MN	2026-09-03
John McClannahan	Pierpont, SD	2026-09-03
Todd Lorenz	Nevis, MN	2026-09-03
John Dietz	Gaylord, MI	2026-09-03
Brendan Letsche	Wilmot, SD	2026-09-04
Bailey Dinger	Aberdeen, SD	2026-09-04
Sean Fulton	Deadwood, SD	2026-09-04
Steve Nelson	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-09-04
Mike Mahan	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-09-04
Tom O'Boyle	Vermillion, SD	2026-09-04
Steve MOORE	New Baltimore, MI	2026-09-04
Dustin Nowotny	Fargo, ND	2026-09-04
Barney Ruehl	Audubon, MN	2026-09-04

Name	Location	Signed On
J.P. Buzynski	North Liberty, IA	2026-09-04
LAURA M Winch	Crosslake, MN	2026-09-04
Sam Kohls	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-09-04
Corey Roth	Altmar, NY	2026-09-04
Scott Kleinschmidt	Maple Grove, MN	2026-09-04
Desn Payne	Mishawaka, IN	2026-09-04
Brian Bungum	Denver, CO	2026-09-04
Doug Vander Esch	Poulsbo, WA	2026-09-04
Emily Nelson	Aberdeen, SD	2026-09-04
Caleb Vander Esch	Chicago, IL	2026-09-04
Elizabeth Vander Esch	Poulsbo, WA	2026-09-04
Chad Speidel	Aberdeen, SD	2026-09-04
Colin Burrer	Groton, SD	2026-09-04
Jordan Scheier	Salem, SD	2026-09-04
DARRELL FRITZ	ROTHSCHILD,WI, WI	2026-09-04
Bailey Mennis	Denver, CO	2026-09-04
Jeanene Sampson	Omaha, NE	2026-09-04
Cathy Stoltz	Alexandria SD, SD	2026-09-04
Anna Flogstad	Montrose, SD	2026-09-04
Ty Hoglund	Dell Rapids, SD	2026-09-04
Trevor Shohoney	Ottawa, IL	2026-09-04

Name	Location	Signed On
Tate Reiner	Tea, SD	2026-09-04
Chad Gordon Chad Gordon	Montrose, SD	2026-09-04
James fouberg	Omaha, SD	2026-09-04
Davis Anderson	Salem, SD	2026-09-04
Nathan stifter	Aitkin, MN	2026-09-04
Rachel Fendrich	Salem, SD	2026-09-04
Gabby Feterl	salem, SD	2026-09-04
Chris Carlson	Savage, MN	2026-09-04
Colby Mennis	Madison, SD	2026-09-04
Michelle Moor	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-09-05
Greg Spivey	Odessa, FL	2026-09-05
mike jones	Lawrenceburg, KY	2026-09-05
Alyssa Plantenberg	Watkins, MN	2026-09-05
Dylan Miller	Yankton, SD	2026-09-05
Carey Lanners	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-09-05
Monte Beck	North Mankato, MN	2026-09-05
Tam Dang	Tacoma, WA	2026-09-05
Brenda Skrove	Jackson, MN	2026-09-05
Gloria Navan	Lawrenceville, GA	2026-09-05
Nick Lind	Belvidere, IL	2026-09-05
Adam Mertz	Watertown, SD	2026-09-06

Name	Location	Signed On
Marcus Quam	Webster, SD	2026-09-06
Jeremy Cummings	Rapid City, SD	2026-09-06
Cody Martin	Gering, NE	2026-09-06
Jonathan Rave	Sioux falls, SD	2026-09-06
Derek Taylor	Faith, SD	2026-09-06
Mark Zacher	Rapid City, SD	2026-09-06
Danial Anderson	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-09-06
David Rohlf	Rapid City, SD	2026-09-06
Miles renner	Lead, SD	2026-09-06
Brian Behlings	Custer, SD	2026-09-06
Gage Renken	Rapid City, SD	2026-09-06
Natasha Taylor	Faith, SD	2026-09-06
Austin Schmalz	Rapid City, SD	2026-09-06
Grant Anderson	Freeman, SD	2026-09-06
Shawn Marta	Spearfish, SD	2026-09-06
Brian Janecke	Rapid City, SD	2026-09-06
Amber Johnson	Hill City, SD	2026-09-06
Mark Harris	Whitewood, SD	2026-09-06
Debbie Kvislen	Aberdeen, United States	2026-09-06
Devon Kutil	Spearfish, SD	2026-09-06
James Ashton	Chesterfield, MO	2026-09-06

Name	Location	Signed On
Karla James	Lake Ozark, MO	2026-09-06
Ben Sieren	Fort Atkinson, WI	2026-09-06
Stu Sondgeroth	Freeport, IL	2026-09-06
Chase Gibson	Minneapolis, MN	2026-09-06
Jared Gauer	Aberdeen, SD	2026-09-06
Tiffany Fleming	Rapid City, SD	2026-09-06
Betsy Weekes	Brookings, SD	2026-09-06
Blake Holden	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-09-06
Chris Zimmermann	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-09-06
Josh Karch	MOORHEAD, MN	2026-09-06
Shawn Earley	Dilworth, MN	2026-09-06
Robert Hansen	West Fargo, MN	2026-09-06
Jerad Newgard	West Fargo, MN	2026-09-06
Chris Voss	Fargo, ND	2026-09-06
Brett Lennox	Moorhead, MN	2026-09-06
Mike Kramer	Moorhead, MN	2026-09-06
Brandon Lennox	Hoffman, MN	2026-09-06
Frederick Athans	Rapid City, SD	2026-09-06
Charlene K Elsen	Aberdeen, SD	2026-09-07
Chandra Elsen	Ellendale, ND	2026-09-07
Tyler Wadman	Waubay, SD	2026-09-07

Name	Location	Signed On
Scott Jung	Aberdeen, SD	2026-09-07
Levi Stifter	Aitkin, MN	2026-09-07
Eric Bommersbach	Harrisburg, SD	2026-09-07
Adam Bommersbach	Omaha, NE	2026-09-07
Amy Meyer	Sioux Falls, SD	2026-09-07
Thomas Massa	Edgemont, SD	2026-09-07



SD FISH AND GAME PUBLIC COMMENTS

7-21-2026

I have hunted Haakon County (31) for 20 years since my son was stationed at Ellsworth AFB. Several times I have not drawn a tag which compelled me to examine the statistical draw process. I was incredulous at what I discovered. I had always imagined that I was one of hundreds that must have been denied. Perplexed beyond reason at what I discovered.

For brevity, I will stick to this year's stats on West River Deer-First Draw.

31A18 ANY WHITETAIL 19 APPLICATIONS 8 APPROVED 11 DENIED

31A08 ANY DEER/ANY ANTERLESS DEER

9 APPLICATIONS 6 APPROVE 3 DENIED

Can someone explain to me why in a county the size of Haakon County, with a whitetail deer population statewide of over¹ 400,000 and a declining whitetail harvest over the past 4 years—on what basis were 11 NON RESIDENT whitetail applications denied and 3 Any Deer?

Please do not attempt to substantiate this **BIOLOGICALLY**. Haakon County averages 35-40 deer strikes by autos yearly. Probably many more go unreported. Poaching, predators probably another 50+. 14 total denied NON RESIDENT applications makes no biological sense or—**FISCAL SENSE**. There is no guarantee that these 14 denied hunters would even be successful!

That's 14 applications left on the **FISCAL TABLE** that would average \$5000 per application of revenue. (air travel, hotels, food , lodging, licenses, gear)

I would suggest that at any level, there are County Managers who after examining this would have the commonsense authority *to manage* and overrule these denials. It makes zero sense not to.

¹ South Dakota Department of Game Wildlife Report 2025-01

PRAIRIE HILLS AUDUBON SOCIETY

P.O. Box 788, Black Hawk, South Dakota 57718
phas.wsd@rapidnet.com | 605-787-6466 | phas-wsd.org

September 6, 2026

Game, Fish and Parks Commission

Joe Foss Building

523 East Capitol Ave.

Pierre, South Dakota 57501

RE: Agenda Item #8 — Finalization, Threatened and Endangered List; proposed amendments to Administrative Rule 41:10:02:01. Comments opposing the proposed removal of the least tern and the Eskimo curlew from the state list, and questioning the proposed relaxation of osprey recovery criteria.

Dear Commissioners:

PHAS asks the Commission to **defer** both proposed delistings rather than act on them at the September meeting. We are not asking the Commission to reject its staff's judgment permanently. We are asking that the record support the decision before the decision is made, and at present it does not.

I. LEAST TERN — Defer to the 2028 biennial review

A. The 2021 federal delisting is not, by itself, a basis for state delisting

The 2013 USFWS five-year review found interior least tern population targets met in the Mississippi, Red, and Arkansas drainages. It found that the Missouri River drainage population had remained stable despite extensive habitat creation and management effort, and that the Missouri drainage supported less than ten percent of the listed population. The federal delisting was a range-wide, metapopulation judgment: the bird recovered elsewhere, and our stretch of river was too small a share of the whole to change the national conclusion.

That is exactly the circumstance South Dakota's own listing framework contemplates. The Department's boilerplate, repeated in every biennial review including this one, states that species delisted under the federal ESA may be included on South Dakota's list because they remain rare within the state's boundaries. Federal recovery in the Mississippi and Arkansas drainages tells the Commission very little about the status of terns on the Missouri and Cheyenne rivers in South Dakota.

B. The Department's own recent reviews contradict the present recommendation

The record contains three statements that cannot all be correct:

- **2022 biennial review:** the Department stated it would continue protecting the least tern as a state endangered species *until state recovery criteria are identified and met*.

- **2024 biennial review** (June 2024), under "State Recovery Criteria/Goals": the Department stated it *had not had the opportunity to gather sufficient information or solicit feedback from species experts to formulate state downlisting and delisting goals*, and recommended no status changes, additions, or deletions.
- **2026 proposal**: the tern *has met the state recovery goals established in the Least Tern and Piping Plover Management Plan* (Aron 2005).

In June 2024 the Department said no state criteria existed and that expert consultation was still needed. Twenty-four months later, criteria said to have existed since 2005 have supposedly been met. PHAS respectfully asks the Commission to require staff to answer, on the record and in writing:

1. When did the Aron 2005 goals become "the state recovery goals," and why did the 2020, 2022, and 2024 reviews state otherwise?
2. Was the expert consultation identified as necessary in June 2024 ever conducted? By whom, and with what result?

C. The Aron 2005 goal is three-part and mandatory, and the proposal shows no numbers for any part

The Least Tern and Piping Plover Management Plan sets a three-pronged goal and states plainly that **all three components must be met**:

1. **Productivity** — a fledge ratio of 1.0 fledgling per adult pair, as a ten-year running average;
2. **Population** — 653 adult birds (327 pairs), as a ten-year running average, on the South Dakota Missouri River stretches;
3. **Habitat** — by 2015, 20 acres of sandbar per river mile on the Fort Randall stretch, 80 acres per mile on Lewis and Clark Lake, and 80 acres per mile on the Gavins Point stretch.

The proposal asserts that these goals are met and presents not a single figure for any of the three. PHAS asks the Commission to require the arithmetic, publicly, before it votes.

Two features of the record make that demand difficult to satisfy:

The fledge ratio may no longer be computable. The Department's own 2024 review states that following the federal delisting, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers *reduced nest monitoring for this species* along the Missouri River system. An adult census is not productivity monitoring. If nest monitoring was curtailed after 2021, there may be no recent fledge-ratio data at all, and a ten-year running average cannot be constructed from data that were not collected. One of the three mandatory components would then be not merely unmet but undemonstrable.

The population figure in the record is not a South Dakota figure. The 2024 review cites a 2023 adult census of approximately 1,300 birds as a Missouri River total. That river spans Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Nebraska. The Aron goal of 653 adults applies to South Dakota reaches only. If a river-wide count is being compared against a state-specific goal, the recommendation rests on a category error.

One further point on the population goal. The 653-bird figure was not a description of the population as it existed. The Department set it at **1.56 times** the 1998-2004

average, deliberately above then-current numbers, on the express premise stated in Guiding Principle 4 that the Corps would honor the habitat commitments of the 2003 Biological Opinion. The tern is no longer a Biological Opinion species. The habitat assumption on which the entire goal was constructed has lapsed, and the Department has not addressed what that does to a goal built on it.

D. The plan's distribution provision independently forecloses a finding that the goal is met

Guiding Principle 1 of the Aron plan states that **regardless of whether the numerical goals are met**, the population goal will not be considered met if the birds, their habitat, or the locations where nests succeed are artificially concentrated along fewer river stretches or within a small area of a stretch.

The Department's own status review — in both the 2024 and 2026 versions — states that the species nests along the Missouri and Cheyenne rivers, **with the majority nesting below Gavins Point Dam** in southeastern South Dakota, and that *for reasons that are unclear, the Cheyenne River's importance to nesting least terns has declined in recent decades*.

That is a description of concentration into fewer stretches, written by the Department, in the same document that recommends delisting. By the plan's own express terms, the population goal is not met, whatever the counts may show.

E. The Cheyenne River is missing from the dataset

The Aron plan commits the Department to monitor least terns on the Cheyenne River **at least biennially**. The 2026 recommendation rests on survey data collected by the Corps of Engineers, and the Corps surveys the Missouri, not the Cheyenne. The delisting recommendation therefore appears to rest on a dataset that structurally excludes the one drainage in which the Department itself documents decline.

PHAS asks: **In what year did the Department last survey least terns on the Cheyenne River, and what were the results?** Our members are in that drainage. If the answer is that no recent survey exists, the Commission should not delist on a record with a hole in it where our members' river should be.

F. The state heritage rank contradicts the proposed action

The least tern carries a South Dakota Natural Heritage rank of **S3 — vulnerable — last reviewed in 2019**, seven years ago and before the federal delisting took effect. The Department updated the Eskimo curlew's rank in 2024, so it plainly re-ranks species when it chooses to. Removing all state protection from a bird the state's own heritage program still calls vulnerable, on a rank nobody has revisited since before the event said to justify the change, is not a defensible sequence. PHAS asks that the S-rank be updated **before** any listing decision, not after.

G. Administrative Rule 41:10:02:18 would be left without a predicate

Rule 41:10:02:18 prohibits harassment of the nesting and rearing sites of "the least tern, an endangered species, and the piping plover, a threatened species," and requires the Department to post signs on Missouri River sandbars. If the tern is removed from the endangered list, the tern half of that rule loses the status on which its own text depends. Piping plovers remain listed, so mixed colonies are

presumably still covered — but least terns also nest in tern-only groups, and those colonies would fall outside the rule as written.

PHAS asks the Department to answer in writing, before the vote: **Does the posting and enforcement obligation under 41:10:02:18 continue for tern-only colonies after delisting, and does the Department intend to amend that rule?** If the answer is that enforcement continues, we would like that on the record. If the answer is that it does not, the Commission is being asked to approve a larger change than the agenda item describes.

H. The federal backstop is thinner in 2026 than it was in 2021

When the Commission last considered this species, more federal protection stood behind the state listing than does today:

- The Migratory Bird Treaty Act protects the birds, their nests, and their eggs — but it protects **no habitat**.
- The tern is not federally listed at all, so no federal listing protections apply.
- The 2015 interagency memorandum of agreement expired without renewal.
- The 20/80/80 sandbar habitat acreages derive from the 2003 Amendment to the Jeopardy Biological Opinion. The tern is no longer a biological opinion species, so those acres now exist for the benefit of piping plover and pallid sturgeon, and would benefit terns only incidentally.
- On **September 14, 2026** — four days after this Commission meeting — the federal rescission of the regulatory definition of "harm" takes effect nationally, removing habitat modification from the scope of prohibited take.

State listing is now close to the only habitat-linked protection remaining for this bird in South Dakota. This is a poor moment to remove it.

I. What PHAS asks on the least tern

Primary request: Defer the least tern delisting to the 2028 biennial review, and direct staff in the interim to (a) publish the South Dakota numbers against all three Aron components, (b) resume biennial Cheyenne River monitoring as the plan requires, (c) update the S3 heritage rank, and (d) resolve the status of Rule 41:10:02:18.

Alternative request: If the Commission believes it must act at this meeting, **downlist the least tern to state threatened rather than delist it**. That recognizes improvement without discarding the state's only remaining habitat-linked protection, and it can be revisited in 2028 when the underlying data exist.

II. ESKIMO CURLEW — Defer until the federal five-year review concludes

PHAS does not dispute the Department's biological assessment. The bird is very likely gone. We object on the narrower ground that **the Department's own stated trigger for reassessment has not occurred**.

The 2024 biennial review states that continued state listing is recommended because the species faces a high probability of extinction, and — the operative sentence — that *in the event that this species is declared extinct and removed*

from the federal list of threatened and endangered species, we will reassess whether continued listing under the South Dakota endangered species law is warranted.

Neither condition has been satisfied. The Eskimo curlew has not been declared extinct. It has not been removed from the federal list; it remains federally endangered and listed on CITES Appendix I. And on **April 8, 2026, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service initiated a new five-year status review** for the species (Docket FWS-R7-ES-2026-0991, 91 Fed. Reg.), which is underway now. The Service's stated reasons for retaining the listing include potential sightings within the last fifteen years, uncertainty about where surveys should even be conducted, and the difficulty of distinguishing the species from other *Numenius*.

PHAS asks the Commission to defer the Eskimo curlew delisting until the federal five-year review concludes, consistent with the condition the Department set for itself in 2024. Continued state listing of a species that is absent or nearly so costs South Dakota nothing. If a curlew is ever reported on migration in eastern South Dakota, state listing is the only hook that exists.

We also ask one procedural question: SDCL 34A-8-5 requires notification of the governors of bordering states in which the species occurs. **Nebraska still lists the Eskimo curlew as state endangered. Was that notice given?**

III. OSPREY — The relaxation of recovery criteria needs a biological explanation

The same proposal weakens the osprey recovery criteria outside the Black Hills: from an average of six active nests to three, and from four successful nests out of six to two out of three. The Department describes this as establishing more realistic goals.

Another way to describe it is that the bar was lowered to meet the population rather than the population raised to meet the bar. The osprey is a Black Hills species and squarely within PHAS's area of concern. If a recovery criterion is being relaxed, the Department should explain **what changed biologically** — in the bird's ecology, in the habitat, or in the science underlying the original target — rather than only that the original target proved difficult to reach. We ask that the Commission require that explanation before adopting the revised criteria.

IV. SUMMARY OF REQUESTED ACTIONS

1. **Defer** the proposed delisting of the least tern to the 2028 biennial review; or, in the alternative, **downlist to state threatened** rather than delist.
2. Direct staff to **publish South Dakota-specific figures for all three Aron 2005 goal components** before any listing decision.
3. Direct staff to **resume biennial Cheyenne River monitoring** as the management plan requires, and to state on the record when the Cheyenne was last surveyed.
4. Direct staff to **update the least tern's 2019 S3 heritage rank** before any listing decision.

5. Obtain a **written answer on Administrative Rule 41:10:02:18** — whether posting and enforcement continue for tern-only colonies, and whether the rule will be amended.
6. **Defer** the proposed delisting of the Eskimo curlew until the federal five-year status review (FWS-R7-ES-2026-0991) concludes.
7. Confirm that **notice under SDCL 34A-8-5** was given to bordering states that list the Eskimo curlew.
8. Require a **biological justification for the relaxed osprey recovery criteria** before adopting them.

PHAS appreciates the Commission's consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Hilding

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A Scientific Review of Mountain Lion Hunting and its Effects

Aggressive Trophy Hunting of Mountain Lions May Exacerbate Human Conflicts with Wildlife

by Jim Keen, D.V.M., Ph.D.

Animal Wellness Action director of veterinary sciences



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Abstract

This article examines the science behind mountain lion trophy hunting in the western United States. Wildlife agencies claim this hunting helps control mountain lion populations and reduces conflicts with humans and livestock. Recent research suggests otherwise.

The History of Mountain Lion Hunting

Mountain lions were once abundant across North America, but widespread hunting drastically reduced their numbers by the 1960s. Since then, many states have allowed hunting them again, with quotas and regulations.

The Science Behind Trophy Hunting

There are three purported reasons why states allow trophy hunting of mountain lions:

1. Increase ungulate populations (deer and elk) for hunters
2. Reduce mountain lion conflicts with humans (public safety)
3. Reduce mountain lion conflicts with livestock and pets (depredation)

However, recent studies looking at actual data tell a different story:

- There's little evidence that trophy hunting significantly boosts deer and elk populations for hunters.
- Surprisingly, the studies show a positive association between trophy hunting and human-lion conflicts. In other words, hunting might actually increase these conflicts

Why Might Hunting Increase Conflicts?

Trophy hunters often target large, dominant males. This disrupts the social structure of mountain lion populations. Younger, less experienced males take over the vacated territories. These younger males may be more likely to attack livestock or even people because they:

- Have less knowledge of their territory and prey availability.
- Face more competition from other males.

California's Different Approach

California banned trophy hunting of mountain lions in 1972. Instead, the state manages conflicts with non-lethal methods like hazing and relocation. California's approach seems to be working:

- It has a healthy mountain lion population.
- Its depredation rates (attacks on livestock) are similar to states with trophy hunting.

The Importance of Apex Predators

Mountain lions play a crucial role in the ecosystem. They help keep prey populations healthy by:

- Removing sick and weak animals ("predator cleansing").
- This can help slow the spread of diseases like Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in deer and elk herds.

Conclusions

- Trophy hunting of mountain lions may not achieve the goals wildlife agencies claim.
- It might even increase human-lion conflicts.
- States should consider alternative, non-lethal management strategies like California's approach.
- Protecting mountain lions benefits the overall health of the ecosystem.

Additional Information

The article also includes details about the scientific studies reviewed and figures illustrating the concepts discussed.

Background

Western state wildlife agencies, such as Colorado Parks and Wildlife, as well as trophy hunting organizations and other like-minded groups, attempt to link two key social benefits to their practice of trophy hunting of mountain lions:

- Growing wild ungulate populations to increase sport-hunting opportunities for deer and elk
- Reducing mountain lion conflicts with humans (public safety) and livestock or pets (depredation)

Historically, mountain lions, the fourth largest felid species globally, had the broadest geographic range of any North American mammal. However, widespread and uncontrolled persecution and bounty hunting of lions driven by human fear and protection of livestock from predation greatly reduced their geographic distribution and population by the 1960s. For example, in Colorado until 1965, mountain lions were considered a “varmint” with a \$50 bounty. The allowance of hunting lions with dogs—a practice generally forbidden for deer and elk hunting—is a present embodiment of anti-predator sentiments that have guided state fish and wildlife agencies for decades.

Wildlife agencies in 12 of 14 Western states with extant lion breeding populations (including Colorado in 1965) chose to manage these large cats as “big game animals” (i.e., large wild animals hunted for sport or food) beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, imposing long hunting seasons and permissive methods of take. Even with modest limits on killing, lions began to make a comeback in the West, moving from extirpated or endangered status to non-endangered.

That said, wild mountain lion population numbers are notoriously difficult to reliably estimate as these large cats are elusive

and wide-ranging across diverse habitats. There has never been a widespread status review of lion numbers throughout their range in the West. It is guesswork, but it’s thought there may be 30,000 mountain lions in 14 Western states: Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

About 3,500 to 4,000 mountain lions per year are killed by trophy hunters in our Western states. In Colorado, the CPW quota allotted for mountain lion trophy hunting from late November 2023 through April 2024 was 664 animals. In recent years, about 500 lions, a slight majority of them adult males, have been killed by trophy hunters annually in Colorado.

The two Western states where mountain lions are not classified as “big game animals” are:

Texas, where mountain lions are considered a nuisance species, are unprotected, and can be hunted without a license, bag limit, or reporting requirement.

California, where lions have been fully protected from sport hunting since 1972 and managed through re-location, non-lethal deterrence, or (rarely) killing of lions that threaten public safety, livestock, or the federally endangered CA bighorn sheep.

It is important to note that mountain lions also live across the Americas. They are hunted in a number of Canadian provinces, but only in Mexico and Peru in Central and South America. They are protected from trophy hunting in 24 of 28 nations, with Argentina permitting hunting of “conflict” pumas.

Methodology & Findings

The [North American Model of Wildlife Conservation](#) is a widely utilized set of seven principles or tenets that guide wildlife protection and management in the United States and Canada. Tenet No. 6 states “Science is the proper tool for discharge of wildlife policy.”

“Science” can be defined as a method for determining what is true, such that science forms an evidentiary basis for action and policy because of its power to predict. Truth in science, it is said, is determined by the collective judgment and agreement of the scientific community. In other words, scientific truth can be defined by “replicability” (i.e., obtaining consistent results across studies aimed at answering the same scientific question using new data or other new computational methods).

Using replicability as a metric for “scientific truth,” we searched the recent (past decade) peer-reviewed and primary (non-review) scientific literature to assess the validity of the three main justifications for mountain lion hunting.

We emphasized field studies that examined the relationship between rates of lion trophy hunting and rates of human conflict with lions, likely the most cited rationale by pro-trophy hunting advocates.

We identified four recent primary (non-review) field-based observational scientific research papers that addressed these issues:

1. Peebles KA, Wielgus RB, Maletzke BT, Swanson ME, 2013. Effects of remedial sport hunting on cougar complaints and livestock depredations. [PLoS ONE 8\(11\):e79713](#).
Read more [here](#).
2. Teichman K, Cristescu B, Darimont CT (2016). Hunting as a management tool? Cougar-human conflict is positively related to trophy hunting. [BMC Ecol 16:44](#).
Read more [here](#).
3. Dellinger JA, Macon DK, Rudd JL, Clifford DL, Torres SG (2021). Temporal trends and drivers of mountain lion depredation in California, USA. [Human-Wildlife Interactions. 15\(1\):21](#).
4. Laundré JW, Papouchis C (2020). The Elephant in the room: What can we learn from California regarding the use of sport hunting of pumas (*Puma concolor*) as a management tool? [PLoS ONE 15\(2\):e0224638](#).
Read more [here](#).

“Ecology is not rocket science; it is much more complicated than that.”

– Marine biologist Peter Sale, 2017

The Four Papers: Main Findings

These published peer-reviewed studies in western U.S. & Canada show the failure of trophy hunting to decrease human-mountain lion conflict



- There is little to no evidence that trophy hunting of mountain lions either significantly increases deer and elk hunting opportunities for sportsmen/women (Laundré & Papouchis 2022) or reduces mountain lion conflicts with people (public safety) and livestock or pets (depredations), a conclusion of all four papers.
- Counter-intuitively, this field-based observational research across all four studies in multiple Western states concluded that trophy hunting of mountain lions exacerbates and worsens human-lion conflict (i.e., there was a positive association between mountain lion hunting and human conflict reports the following year). The mechanism appears to be that trophy mountain lion hunting destabilizes mountain lion social-, territorial- and age-sex structures.
- Trophy hunters often target the largest and most dominant individuals, which are usually older males. This alters the age structure of exploited lion populations, creating vacancies in the previously occupied territories and allowing younger and less experienced subadult males to take over territories. These conditions may all promote conflicts with people. Younger males may be more likely to attack livestock or humans, as they have less knowledge of their territory and prey availability and may face more competition from other males.
- We found no recent field-based research reports in the peer-reviewed literature that describe a negative correlation between mountain lion trophy hunting and human-lion conflict reports.

“The great tragedy of science — the slaying of a beautiful hypothesis by an ugly fact.”
– *Anthropologist-biologist Thomas Huxley, 1870*

Table 1A: In Study No. 1, the no. of mountain lions killed by trophy hunting in the previous year was positively associated with increased depredation & conflict

Study 1	Location, goal & design	Data, analysis & findings	Conclusions & comments
Peebles et al 2013. Effects of remedial sport hunting on cougar complaints and livestock depredations. <i>PLoS ONE</i>. 8(11): e79713. https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0079713 Comments: Cougars inhabit approx. 61% of WA state land mass. Depredation are attacks on or killing of domestic livestock & pets (cats or dogs) as confirmed by WDFW. Remedial sport hunting is practice of increasing hunting of predators to reduce their population & associated human complaints & livestock depredations.	Location: Washington state Goal: Assess effects of remedial sport hunting on reducing cougar complaints & livestock depredations in WA from 2005 to 2010 (6 years). Remedial sport hunting is a practice of hunting predators to reduce their population and the associated human complaints & livestock depredations. Design: Large-scale (statewide) long-term (6 year) observational study. The no. of complaints, livestock depredations, lions harvested, estimated lion populations, human population & livestock populations were calculated for all 39 counties & 136 GMUs (game management units) in WA Hypothesis: Investigators tested the widely accepted idea that increased sport hunting will decrease cougar complaints & lion depredations in an observational study. The “remedial hunting” hypothesis predicts that lion complaints & livestock depredations will decrease after increased sport hunting. The “source-sink” hypothesis predicts that lion complaints & livestock depredations will remain stable or increase after increased sport hunting.	Data: The following information was calculated for all 39 counties & 136 GMUs in WA for each year from 2005 to 2010: Independent (explanatory) variables: - No. of people; No. of cougars; No. of hunter harvested cougars (n=1,068); - No. of small & large livestock. Two response (dependent or outcome) variables: - Number of verified cougar complaints (n=432); - No. of verified livestock depredations (n=166) & no. of pet depredations (n=41) - Data dominated by hunting mortalities (n = 7550) w/ conflict-related kills less frequent (n = 1238). Dataset had more male (n = 5348) than female records (n = 3440). Main analysis: Negative binomial generalized linear models tested the expected negative relationship between the no. of verified lion complaints & no. of lion depredations in the current year (for both response variables) w/ the no. of lions harvested in the previous year. Results: As expected, lion complaints & depredations were positively associated w/ human population, livestock population & lion population. Contrary to expectations, lion complaints & depredations were most strongly associated w/the number of lions harvested the previous year. 1) The odds of lion complaints & livestock depredations increased dramatically (36% to 240%) w/increased lion harvest the previous year. 2) For each 100% increase in adult lion harvest, the odds of a verified complaint the following year increased by 160%. For each 10% increase in lion harvest, the odds of a verified complaint increased by 16%. 3) Effect of lions harvested the previous year on odds of verified complaints is 10 times higher (1.36 vs 1.03) vs. effect of no. of cougars in the landscape. 4) For each adult lion harvested, the odds of a depredation occurring the following year increased by 50%. 5) Livestock losses rose annually in correlation w/ the no. of lions taken by hunters but only in counties that experienced changed cougar demography.	Hunting of cougars had the greatest effects on lion depredations & complaints, but not as expected. Remedial hunting of lions in WA was associated w/increased, not decreased lion complaints & depredations. This supports the source-sink hypothesis. Very heavy hunting (eg 100% removal of resident adults in 1 year) increased the odds of lion complaints & depredations in year 2 by 150% to 340%. Widespread indiscriminate hunting does not appear to be an effective preventative & remedial method to reduce predator complaints & livestock depredations. Note: Increased trophy hunting fails to account for compensatory immigration & the shift in the sex-age structure towards younger male cougars which may be responsible for the increased reports of depredations. The investigators suggest that increased young male immigration, social disruption of lion populations & associated changes in space use by lions caused by increased hunting resulted in more complaints & livestock depredations.

Table 1B: In Study No. 2, the no. of lions killed by trophy hunters in the current & previous year was positively associated with increased human-lion conflict

Study 2	Location, goal & design	Data, analysis & findings	Conclusions & comments
Teichman et al 2016. Hunting as a management tool? Cougar-human conflict is positively related to trophy hunting. <i>BMC Ecology</i>. 16, 44 https://bmcecol.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12898-016-0098-4 Comments: Vancouver Island is also called “VanCougar” BC as it is the world’s ‘hotspot’ of cougar-human conflict https://vancouverguardian.com/vancouver-island-cougar/ Vancouver Island has the highest concentration of cougars in the world w/ est. population of 600 to 800. The island has a land area of 31,285 km² https://www.nsnews.com/in-the-community/this-bc-island-has-the-highest-concentration-of-cougars-in-the-world-3124721 Cougars thrive via abundance of black-tailed deer on the island. Black-tailed deer are a subspecies of mule deer.	Location: British Columbia (BC), Canada including Vancouver Island Goal: To challenge the commonly accepted but under-examined assumption that hunting large carnivores decreases predator-human conflict Objectives: (1) To determine whether cougar trophy hunting and conflict incidence mortality are related & (2) To test if cougars killed by hunters are larger than those that came into conflict with people. Design: Observational. Authors analyzed a 30-year (1979-2008) data set on hunter-caused & conflict-associated cougar mortality across five regions in British Columbia, Canada, including Vancouver Island. Hypothesis: <i>Young animal hypothesis</i> – high hunter mortality leads to young animals (esp males) becoming involved in conflict.	Data: Records of mountain lion kills by BC resident hunters & non-resident guided hunters ($n = 3219$) as well as conflict-related cougar deaths ($n = 449$). Lion age estimated by skull size measurements. Main analysis: Multiple linear regression modeling. Outcome variable: Cougar conflict incidence per 10Km² Conflict defined as any incident of cougar road mortality, predation on livestock, perceived risk to people e.g. cougars sighted in urban areas, or recorded attack on humans. Predictor variables: Human density (D), human hunting pressure (annual no. of lions hunted per 10km²) in year of conflict (H_0); Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI; a proxy for plant and prey productivity) in year of conflict. Separate analysis for each of five regions of British Columbia, CAN Results: 1 - A consistent regional-scale pattern revealed that trophy hunting pressure on lions was associated w/ increased lion-human conflict. 2 - Lions that came into conflict with humans were younger vs those killed by trophy hunters 3 - Human hunting pressure during or before the year of conflict were associated with increased male cougar-human conflict & were the most important predictive variables. 4 - In all five regions assessed, cougar conflict was higher with increased human hunting pressure for at least one cougar sex. 5 - Human hunting pressure in both current and lagged periods had the most relative importance for predicting cougar-human conflict for male cougars across the five regions. 6 - Human hunting was positively associated male cougar conflict 7 - Overall, increased human hunting was related to greater conflict for 16 of 17 models that included hunting variables	Hunting of cougars is often associated with increases - not decreases - in mountain lion-human conflict. This study’s patterns over large geographic & temporal scales suggest that alternative approaches to conflict mitigation than hunting might yield more effective outcomes for humans as well as cougar populations & the individuals within populations. Hunting provides a poor & often counter-productive method for managing conflict with large predators. Although these results are correlative, the authors caution against the universal use of hunting as a tool for managing conflict with large apex predators such as mountain lions. This study supports the young animal hypothesis ie that high hunter mortality leads to young lions getting into conflict w/ people, domestic animals & pets. Trophy hunters primarily target the biggest individuals in a population. When adult resident cougars are consistently killed by hunters, it can disrupt cougar reproductive strategies, dispersal patterns and social structure e.g. when a resident cougar is removed from his territory, it creates openings for multiple conflict-prone dispersing sub-adult males to claim vacant territories, thereby potentially exacerbating cougar-human conflict. Note: This blog is a simplified explanation of this study by the lead author: “<i>Trophy hunting - unexpected consequences for cougar-human conflict</i>” https://blogs.biomedcentral.com/bmcseriesblog/2016/10/27/trophy-hunting-unexpected-consequences-cougar-human-conflict

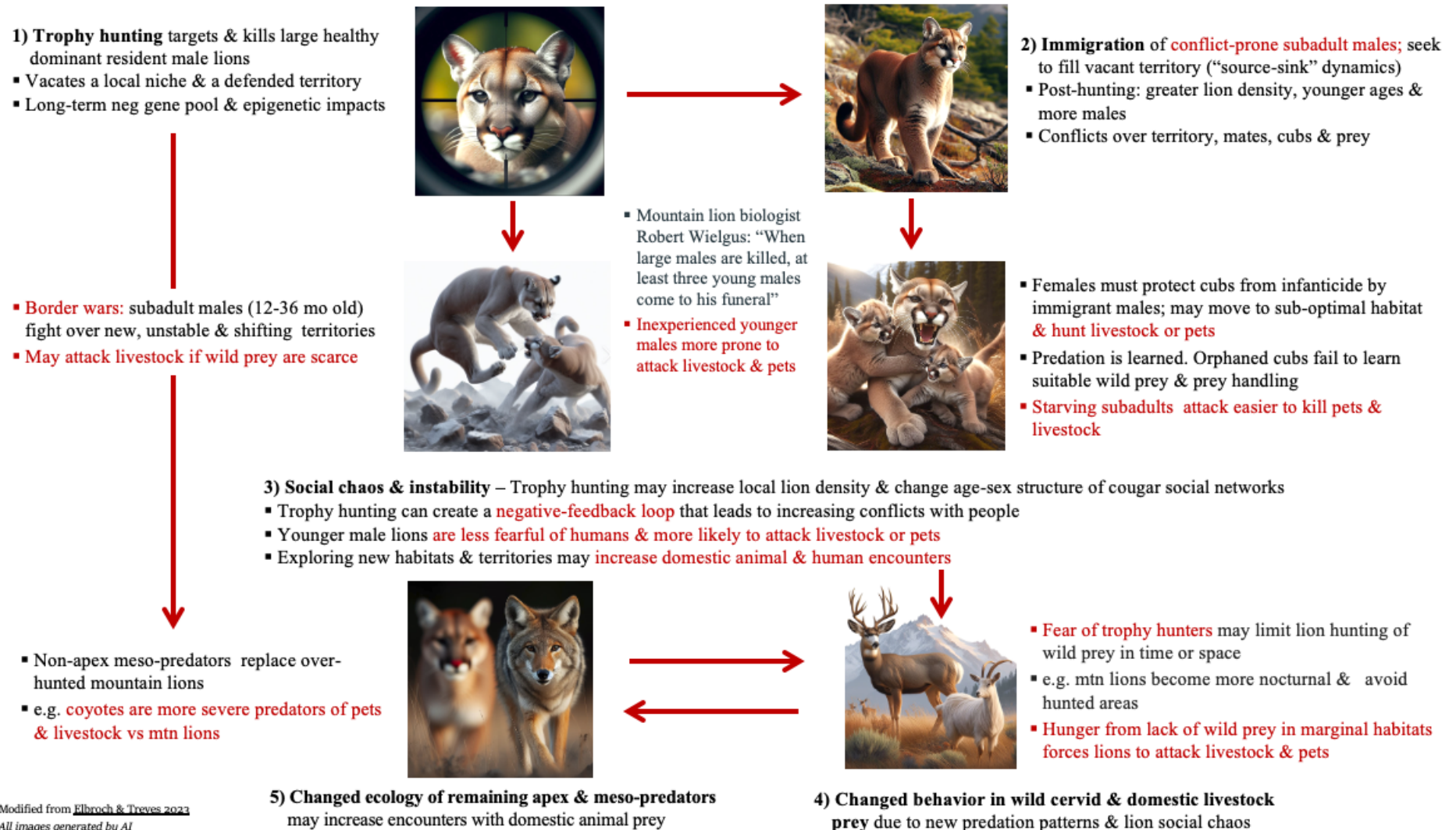
Table 1C: Study No. 3, the no. of mountain lions removed due to human conflict the previous year was positively associated with increasing lion depredation

Study 3	Location, goal & design	Data, analysis & findings	Conclusions & comments
Dellinger et al 2021. Temporal trends and drivers of mountain lion depredation in California, USA. <i>Human-Wildlife Interactions</i> 15(1):162–177, Spring 2021 https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1712&context=hwi Comments: Half of the CA landscape is suitable as mountain lion habitat. Mtn lion population mgmt. in CA has varied widely over past 100 plus years, ranging from a bounty system (1906–1963) to specially-protected status (1972–present) Uniquely in CA, lions are managed only in the context of human-large carnivore conflict (ie public safety or depredations) <i>without trophy hunting</i>. Offending mtn lions can be lethally removed during a 10-day period via CDFW permit Out of 13 western States w/ breeding mtn lion populations, CA is the only state that bans lion hunting (since 1972). In 1990, CA citizens voted into law Proposition 117 to make mtn lions specially protected.	Location: California Goal: To examine temporal trends (increasing / decreasing /stable) in mtn lion depredations as well as factors influencing annual depredation rates at the county level from 1972 to 2019. Design: Observational time series Hypothesis: Increasing depredation rates would: (1) Be highest at intermediate human densities (quadratic & (2) Have a positive linear association w/: - Increasing amount of suitable lion habitat & habitat quality - No. of hoof stock present in ag operations & - No. of mountain lions removed the previous year Rationale: California can serve as a “control” for trophy hunting-free mtn lion mgmt vs the 12 other Western states that permit lion trophy hunting.	Data: County-level CDFW mtn lion depredation data over 48 years (1972 to 2019) for all 58 CA counties including 7,719 confirmed lion depredations of domestic animals; includes 3,394 individual lions lethally removed. Used to derive 1,456 annual depredation rates by county from 1972 to 2019 - Depredations grouped as <i>pets</i> (dogs, cats, poultry; n=802); <i>small hoofstock</i> (pigs, goats, llamas & sheep; n=4,718) & <i>large hoofstock</i> (cattle & horses; n=1,013). - Bounty killing records from 1907 to 1963 for 12,580 mtn lions purposely removed to protect domestic animals & promote wild cervids. Main analysis: Poisson regression modeling to test hypothesis (1); linear regression modeling to test hypothesis (2). Outcome (dependent) variable: Mtn lion depredations by year & county for pets, small- & large-hoofstock; Independent (predictor) variables (by year & county): Amount of suitable lion habitat (km²); No. of animals in ag production per km²; No. of mtn lions removed previous year; Human density per km²; No. of mtn lions bountied per county from 1906 to 1963 (proxy for lion habitat quality) Results: 1 - Mtn lion depredations were positively associated w/ no. of mtn lions lethally removed the previous year in a county. <i>Depredation rates increased 9% for every mtn lion removed on a depredation permit the previous year.</i> 2 - Human density & agricultural productivity were negatively associated with increasing lion depredation rates 3 - Amount of suitable habitat was positively associated w/ increasing depredation rates 4 - Increase in annual overall no. of mtn lion depredations & for each type of domestic animal over time from 1972 to 2019 5 - Smaller-sized hoofstock operations in areas of suitable mountain lion habitat are key factors in predicting mountain lion depredations in CA	The permanent removal of offending individual lions appears to increase the potential for conflict in the next year. Confirms Peebles et al 2013 (Study No. 1) and Teichman et al 2016. (Study No. 2). “Proof” in science is determined by repeatability of findings in different settings or conditions This work points to presence & quality of mtn lion habitat & wildlife mgmt actions as primary drivers predicting lion depredation. CA mtn lion depredations increased over time & most often associated w/ small hoofstock (esp sheep & goats) & pets. Note: The positive relationship between no. of lions lethally removed one year & increased depredations the next year seems counter-intuitive. However: - Lethal resident adult removal creates vacancies & increases subadult male migration - Removals may create a negative-feedback loop leading to increasing conflict & even more lethal removals. - Maintaining an older lion age structure by reducing lethal removal of resident adults could mitigate depredations - Improving husbandry for pets & small hoof-stock living in areas occupied by mtn lions may be the most effective way to reduce human–predator conflicts in CA & elsewhere

Table 1D: Study No. 4, CA without mountain lion trophy hunting had a lower rate of lion-human conflicts than eight of ten Western states with lion trophy hunting

Study 4	Location, goal & design	Data, analysis & findings	Conclusions & comments
Laundré & Papouchis 2020. The Elephant in the room: What can we learn from California regarding the use of sport hunting of pumas (<i>Puma concolor</i>) as a management tool? <i>PLoS ONE</i> 15(2): e0224638. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0224638 Comments: Mtn lion mgmt in the western U.S. is highly contentious, especially regarding use of trophy hunting as a wildlife mgmt tool. In the 1970's, mountain lions were re-classified as game species in ten of 12 western states where lions still occurred & sport hunting was established. This provided some lion protection via closed seasons & bag limits vs. previous decades of unrestricted lion bounty hunting. The two exceptions are <i>Texas</i> where mtn lions are unprotected & can be hunted w/o license or limit, & <i>California</i> where lions are fully protected from sport hunting & managed thru relocation, non-lethal deterrence, or killing of lions that threaten public safety, livestock or the endangered CA desert bighorn sheep. From 2000 to 2015, total mtn lion mortality in 10 trophy hunting states remained at 300-400 lions per state per year w/ from sport hunting. CA lions killed were consistently lower (<150 lions/year) vs. 10 trophy hunting states.	Location: Eleven Western U.S. States w/ breeding mountain lion populations: AZ, CA, CO, ID, MT, NV, NM, OR, UT, WA & WY Goal: The wildlife mgmt rationale for mtn lion trophy hunting is that it provides recreational hunting & also reduces threats to human safety & livestock depredation & increases deer & elk populations, the lion's main prey. An increasing no. of scientific studies question if sport hunting meets these agency mgmt objectives. Design: Comparative observational study of agency mtn lion mgmt claims in ten states that permit lion trophy hunting vs CA (as hunting-free control) w/ a 2000 to 2015 time-frame focus. Hypotheses: Mountain lion trophy hunting will: 1 - Suppress mountain lion populations; 2 - Reduce problematic lion-human encounters; 3 - Reduce lion predation on domestic livestock; 4 - Reduce impact of lion predation on wild ungulate numbers resulting in increased sport hunting opportunities of elk & deer. Rationale: If sport hunting is achieving the mgmt goals of state wildlife managers, then CA w/o a lion trophy hunt should have: 1 - higher lion population densities; 2 - higher per-capita problematic lion-human conflicts 3 - greater lion predation on domestic sheep & cattle; & 4 - higher levels of lion predation on wild ungulates results in lower deer sport hunting opportunities	Data: Analyzed data was not collected by the authors but was collated from various open access files of state & federal agencies w/ lion mgmt control for all eleven states including: 1 - Estimated mountain lion abundance 2 - Number of lions killed yearly by sport hunters & other causes of mortality 3 - Estimated deer populations 4 - Estimated deer killed yearly by hunters 5 - Estimated no. of livestock, cattle & sheep 6 - Estimated no. of livestock, cattle & sheep killed by mountain lions 7 - Estimated number of mountain lion-human incidents (conflicts) for each state Main analysis: Data from all 11 states was standardized. CA data was then statistically compared to equivalent data from the ten states w/ lion trophy hunts. Comparisons focused on the recent 15 years of intense mtn lion management (2000-2015). Results: Compared to 10 Western states where lions are trophy hunted, CA had 1 - Similar mtn lion densities; 2 - The 3rd lowest per capita problematic mtn lion-human encounters; 3 - Similar per capita loss of cattle & significantly lower loss of sheep; 4 - Similar average deer densities w/ annual changes in deer populations similar to changes in the other 10 states	There is <i>no evidence</i> that mountain lion trophy hunting has produced the mgmt outcomes sought by wildlife managers beyond providing a sport hunting opportunity. Because other research suggests that <i>trophy hunting exacerbates conflicts between mountain lions & people</i> (eg Peebles et al 2013 (Study No. 1), Teichman et al 2016 (Study No. 2), Dellinger et al 2021 (Study No. 3), the authors recommend that <i>state agencies re-assess the use of trophy hunting as a mtn lion mgmt tool.</i> Note: The primary mgmt objective for lion sport hunting in the ten western states was usually to set "bag limits" similar to historic bounty kill levels, which, regionally, never exceeded 1,000 animals per year. However, by 2016, the 10-state average kill rate of lions was 390 per state or over 3,900 lions per year; >89% were killed by sport hunters & the rest for specific threats to human safety, livestock depredation or accidents. https://www.eastoregonian.com/sports/outside/study-evidence-does-not-support-hunting-as-way-to-control/article_ba7bfd56-5827-11ea-a59a-4bae963d6dc2.html

Figure 1: Mountain lion trophy hunting increases risks of human-lion conflicts



Modified from [Elbroch & Treves 2023](#)
All images generated by AI

Figure 2: Human-mountain lion conflict in wild, rural, & suburban Colorado



Sport recreation for lion trophy hunters

- In 2022, 2,165 resident & 506 non-resident licenses sold in Colorado; **486 lions killed**
- Just **four out of every 10,000** of CO's 5.84M residents bought a mtn lion license in 2022
- Miniscule lion license revenues of ~\$280K per year for Colorado Parks & Wildlife = **0.14%** of \$200 million CPW annual budget
- Modest to large incomes for allied game industries e.g. guns, lodging, guides & outfitters e.g. **"guaranteed lion kill"** outfitted hound hunt costs \$6.5K to \$8K
- Small number of beneficiaries of the taking of this wild public natural resource



Mountain lions may enter human suburban & exurban domains

- Lions may frighten or threaten people & their pets
- Lions are wary & avoid people.
- **Attacks on humans are rare.** Dogs (via bites) & deer (via vehicle collisions) injure & kill far more people vs lions



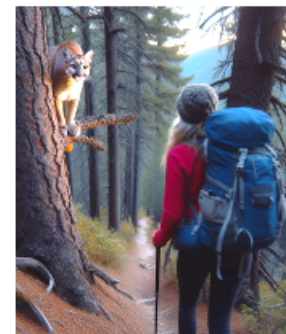
Mountain lions compete with human hunters for wild ungulate prey especially deer & elk

- A mature lion must kill the equivalent of one adult deer every seven to twelve days to survive
- High human cervid harvests may pressure lions to prey on livestock
- **Lions w/ little interest in farm live-stock if wild deer & elk are abundant**



Mountain lions may attack un-guarded or un-protected livestock

- Calves, sheep & goats at highest risk
- Ranchers & farmers should adopt **non-lethal deterrence** for human-lion co-existence e.g. guard dogs & hazing



People entering Colorado's wild spaces may encounter mountain lions

- About 57% of state is suitable lion habitat
- Onus on people as visitors to lion's home to minimize their personal risk

Images generated by AI

A note on the “California system”

Mountain lions are legally classified in California as a “specially protected species” in 1990 when voters approved a 1990 ballot measure and then affirmed the original vote in a subsequent plebiscite in 1996. Because it had no mountain lion trophy hunting over the previous 51 years, Laundré and Papouchis (2020) used California as a “control state” to compare outcomes within 10 Western states with trophy hunting of mountain lions. Laundré chose California for two reasons. First, it has had a thriving mountain lion population with no mountain lion hunting for the past half century. Second, its depredation rates, human-conflict reports, and cervid population density are quite similar to those in the Western states with trophy hunting as the “elephant in the room.” In other words, the mountain lion trophy hunting states know about the California system but they refuse to acknowledge California’s data or to adapt their lion management policies towards less trophy hunting.

Rather than managing mountain lions through regulated hunting, wildlife managers in California issue depredation permits to help manage lions. According to the California Fish and Game Code, a mountain lion depredation permit expires 10 days after issuance. However, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife policy requires landowners to try non-lethal means to deter mountain lions from attacking domesticated animals before requesting a lethal permit. Non-lethal methods used to discourage depredation by mountain lions include aggressive hazing that does not injure or kill the mountain lion. This includes the use of less-than-lethal ammunition (beanbags, rubber bullets, cracker shells, rock salt, paintballs), noise-making devices, pursuit with an all-terrain vehicle, and/or pursuit with dogs. If the hazing fails to keep the predators away, authorities consider other strategies, including trapping

and tagging the lions so that officials can alert landowners when threats are near.

California does have regulations allowing for the take (killing) of depredating mountain lions and for the removal of individual lions that are deemed a safety risk to people. However, only a mountain lion posing an imminent threat to human life may be killed for public safety. This is defined as a lion exhibiting one or more aggressive behaviors directed toward a person that is not reasonably believed to be due to the presence of responders. All situations that do not meet this threshold must be resolved with non-lethal force (hazing, tranquilizing, capturing, relocating, monitoring, etc.). From 2001 to 2019, an average of 186 depredation permits were issued resulting in an average of 89 lions killed per year (Table 2A). A report from California Fish and Wildlife stated that in 2021, 163 (90%) of the 182 mountain lion depredation permits issued in California were nonlethal. Another CDFW report stated that just 61 lions were killed in California for depredation between 2020 and 2022, an average of just 22 lions killed per year (Table 2B). In 2023, that number fell to 10 lions killed in the state. Note that this recent number of lions killed for depredation in California (~22 per year) is far below the average of 500 to 600 lions that might be killed if California had a trophy hunting season with participation levels that matched those in Colorado and other western states.

In brief, the California mountain lion experience is unequivocal in two primary messages:

- Mountain lion hunting is unnecessary to minimize human-lion conflicts.
- Non-lethal methods are effective at preventing mountain lion depredation.

Table 2A: Mountain lion depredation permits & take, California, 2000-2019

Years	No. of depredation permits issued	Lethal take (n lions killed for depredation)
2001-2019	3,726	1,784 (48%)
Avg per year	186.3	89.2
Range	132-334	57-125

Source: California Dept of Fish & Wildlife

Table 2B: Mountain lion depredation permits & take, California, 2020-2022

Year	No. of non-lethal depredation permits issued	No. of lethal depredation permits issued	Total no. of depredations permits issued (non-lethal & lethal)	Lethal take (No. of lions killed for depredation)
2020	189	100	289	48 (17%)
2021	167	16	183	3 (1.6%)
2022	166	18	184	10 (5.4%)

Source: CDFW

Conclusions

The success of CPW and several other Western state wildlife agencies in the managed recovery of mountain lion populations over the past 50 years should be lauded and gratefully acknowledged as an important apex predator and ecosystem conservation success story.

However, CPW and other state wildlife agencies' current justifications for trophy hunting of mountain lions are based on the hypotheses that the killing of lions by hunters will suppress lion numbers and reduce undesirable lion impacts on human safety, livestock, and ungulate populations. *These hypotheses are not supported by recent scientific evidence.*

Scientific evidence using field data from multiple sources shows that none of CPW's mountain lion management goals, other than creating trophy hunting opportunities for a tiny wealthy sliver of the hunting population, are achieved with the current lion management policies.

Under [adaptive management](#) (where wildlife management learns from previous actions and adjusts future actions accordingly) and [ecosystem management](#) (the holistic approach to wildlife management that considers interactions and interdependencies among all components of an ecosystem, including the top-down benefits of an intact apex predator guild), state fish and wildlife agencies in the West need not permit trophy hunting of lions for either population control or reduction of human-lion conflict. If they permit the seasons, they should understand that they are allowing for lethal recreational activities and that this form of population exploitation may exacerbate human-wildlife conflicts. California has shown that non-lethal mountain lion management is largely effective for mountain lion-human co-existence.

[“Predator cleansing”](#) refers to the phenomenon of predators killing and removing the sickest and weakest individuals from prey populations, thereby improving the overall health and fitness of the prey. [In contrast to natural predators, who typically take the “newly born or the nearly dead,” trophy hunters generally favor killing large dominant males and large female lions, although judging size or age is very difficult for even the most experienced hunter.](#)

Predator cleansing can have various beneficial ecological and evolutionary effects, such as reducing the spread of diseases, maintaining genetic diversity, and stabilizing population dynamics. Notably, human deer and elk hunters avoid these same unhealthy deer and elk that are targeted by large apex carnivore predators. *The fewer apex predators removed by trophy hunters, the greater will be the natural “cleansing” benefits of apex predators on their cervid prey.* See [Figures 3, 4, and 5](#) below.

The deer and elk herds of Colorado (in particular) along with cervid herds in most western and intermountain states with breeding mountain lion populations are moderately to heavily infected with the uniformly fatal, slowly but progressively spreading, and potentially zoonotic prion infection [Chronic Wasting Disease](#) (CWD). The rates of cervid infection are highest in areas where lions are not present or rarely present, and they are lowest in habitats with higher rates of occupancy of suitable habitat. This prion disease, according to some models, [may cause the collapse and even extirpation of deer and elk populations](#) from some locations within the next few decades, including Colorado. Apex- and meso-carnivore predators, including [mountain lions](#), [wolves](#), and [bobcats](#), are perhaps [our best defense and offense](#) against this endemic and epidemic cervid prion disease.

These four papers all have flaws, as do all scientific research papers. However, despite different study populations and states, the essential conclusions were the same: Mountain lion hunt-

ing does not reduce human-lion conflicts or depredations of pets or livestock.

Figure 3: Trophy hunting of mountain lions results in higher incidence of CWD in cervids and fewer healthy cervids for hunters

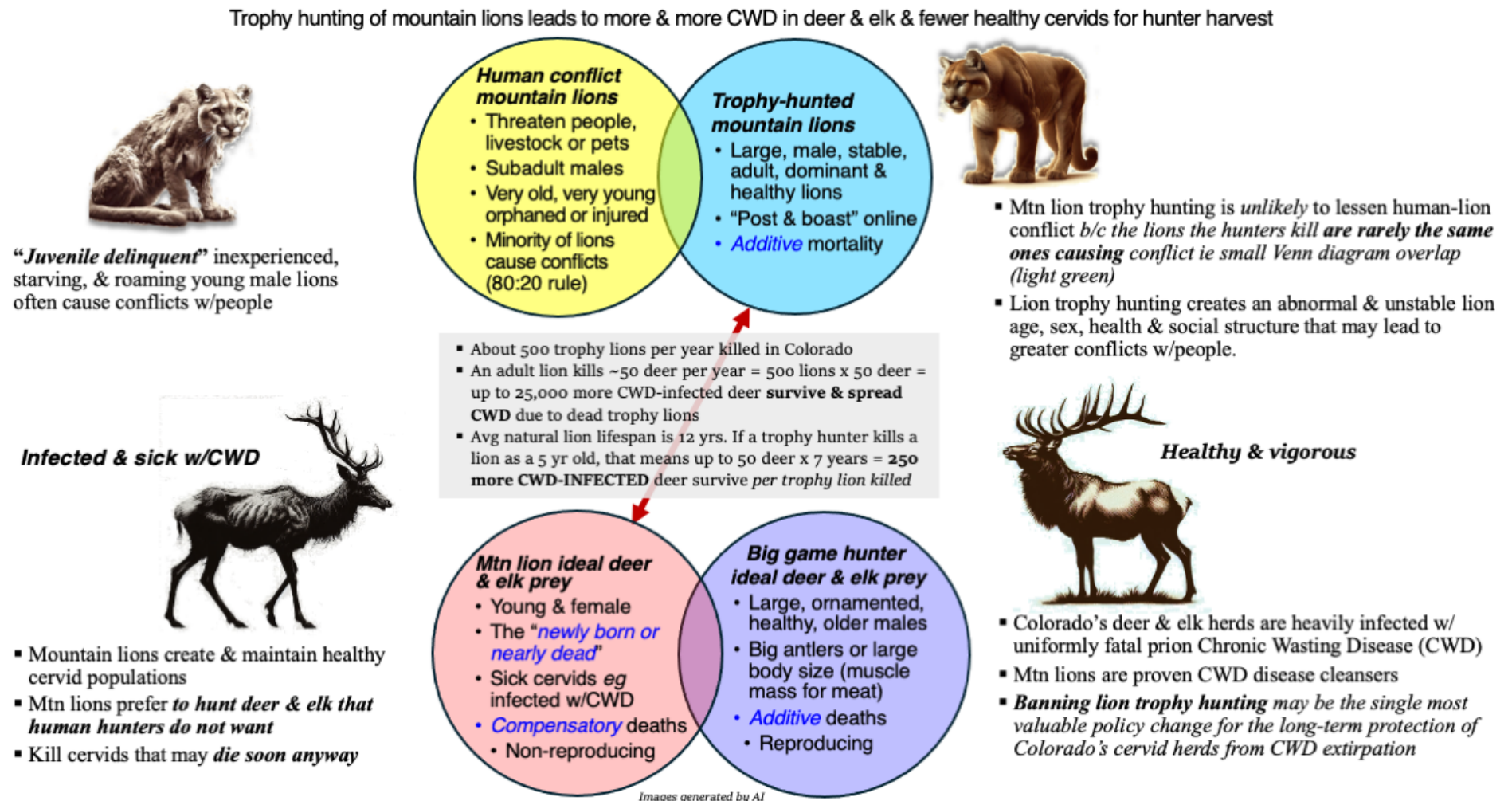
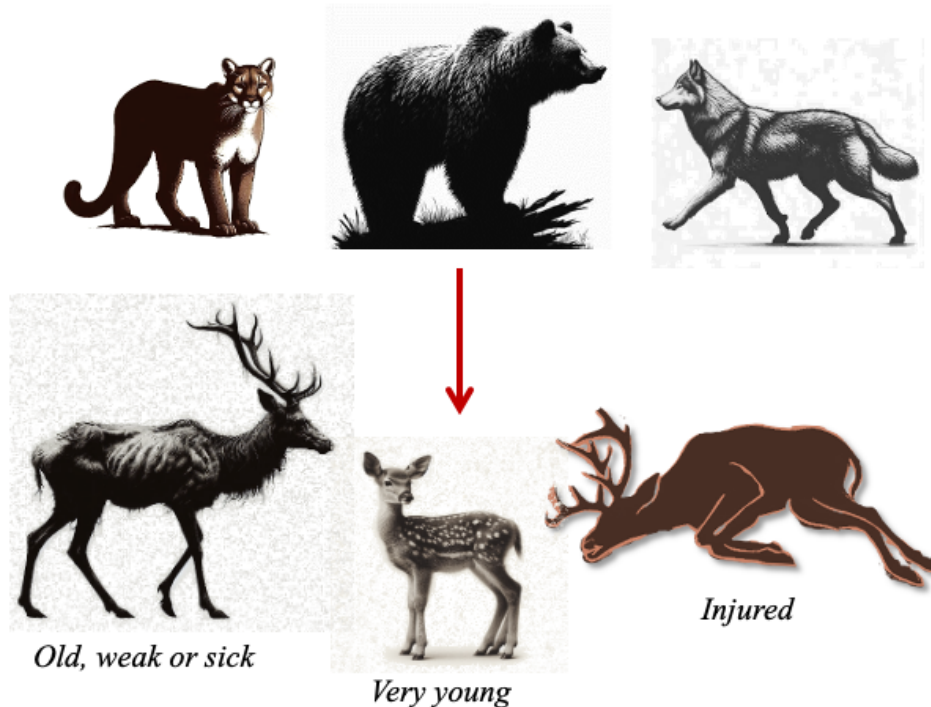


Figure 4: Predator “cleansing” of diseased or weakened prey vs. human trophy hunting

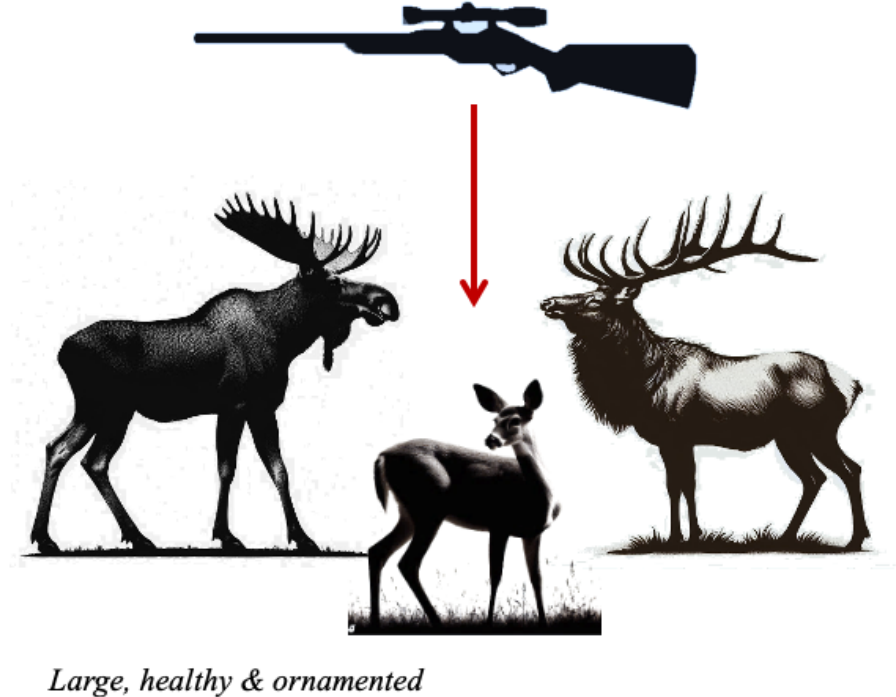
Apex predators – target **sick, weak, injured, very young, very old or otherwise vulnerable deer or elk** that are easiest to kill without injuring the predator



Outcome – Healthier cervid populations

- *Survival of the fittest cervids*

Trophy hunters – select **healthy young deer** for venison (meat) & **large healthy antlered adult males**; avoid obviously sick deer

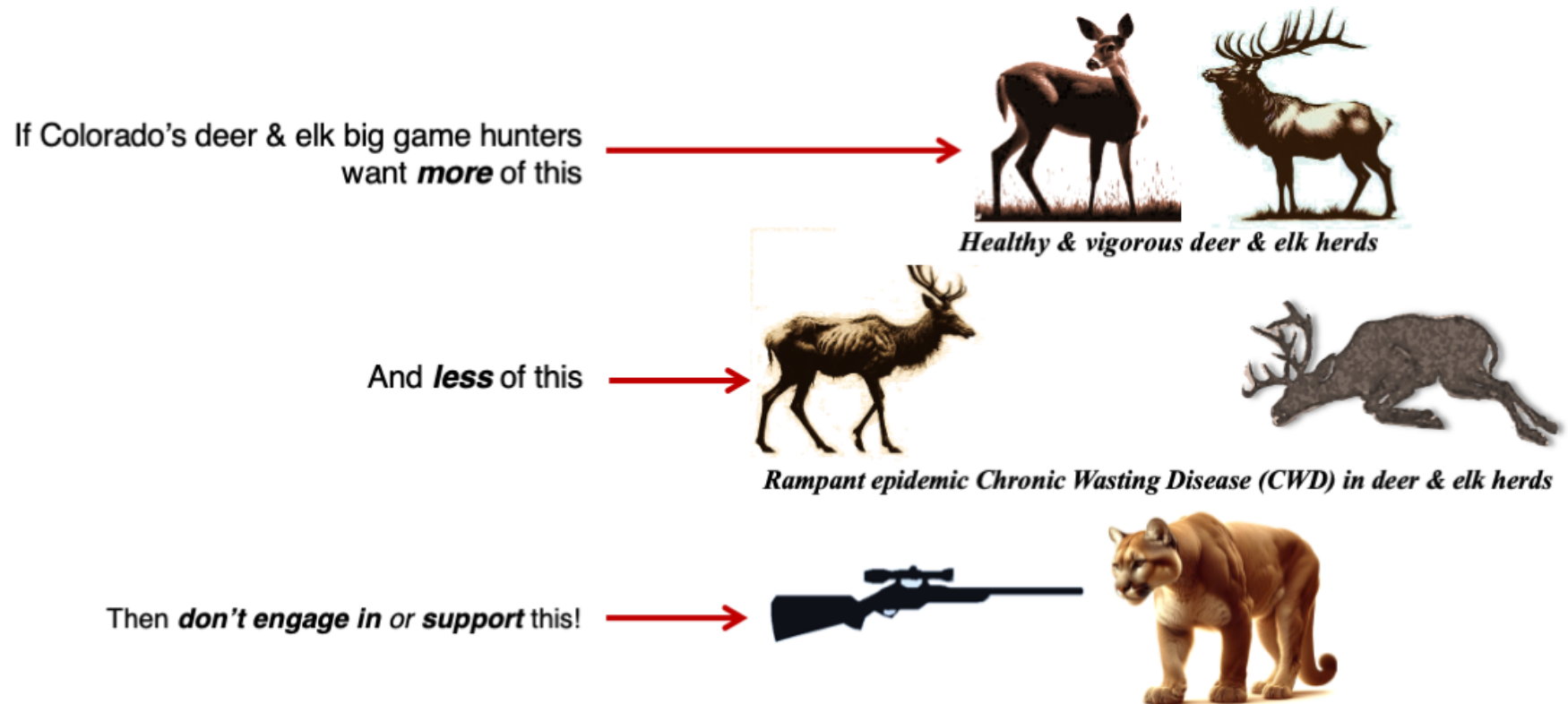


Outcome – Less healthy cervid populations

- *Early death of the fittest cervids*

Images generated by AI

Figure 5: Mountain lions benefit Colorado deer & elk hunters



Mountain lion trophy hunting in Colorado:

- WORSENS** CWD spread in deer & elk herds
- EXACERBATES** CWD zoonotic risk to people who consume deer & elk meat
- NOT** like principled deer & elk hunting
- NOT** fair chase – shoot a treed, exhausted & terrified lion unable to escape; a “fish in a barrel”
- NOT** ethical or honorable – basically a canned hunt; “guaranteed kill” w/ outfitter guides & hounds
- NOT** sporting or respectful of game – use e-distress calls & radio- & GPS-collared hounds to chase lions
- WASTEFUL** – false claims that lion meat is consumed
- NO** evidence of wildlife conservation value
- INCREASES** human-lion conflicts

A simple solution to a complex problem:

Leave mountain lions alone to manage CWD naturally via “predator cleansing”

“CWD is the biggest threat to the future of deer hunting”
Theodore Roosevelt
Conservation Partnership

Images generated by AI

About the Author



Jim Keen, D.V.M., Ph.D., earned his veterinary medicine and epidemiology doctorate degrees from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He was a senior veterinary researcher focused on livestock and zoonotic infections with the USDA Agricultural Research Service in Nebraska for 15 years and later faculty at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln School of Veterinary Medicine for 13 years. His specific expertise is emerging and zoonotic infectious diseases of farmed animals.

He has broad field experience in outbreak investigation and animal disease control including enteric zoonotic bacteria from livestock in the U.S., Foot and Mouth Disease in the United Kingdom, and African Swine Fever in the Caucasus. Keen lives on his family's 140-year old grain farm in South Dakota. He is Director of Veterinary Sciences at the Center for a Humane Economy.

Dear Commissioners,

Over the past three years of hiking and scouting in Elk Units 1, 2, and 3 in the Black Hills, I have observed an increasingly large number of trail cameras—often multiple devices at a single waterhole. I am aware that some outfitters deploy well over one hundred cameras. After more than forty years of archery hunting, I believe this level of surveillance has fundamentally changed the nature of the activity.

Trail cameras create an environment where hunters are unknowingly filmed, and they foster the perception that the person who placed the camera has claimed that location. A small number of individuals are exploiting public resources for personal advantage, diminishing the experience for others.

Decades ago, Alaska prohibited same-day fly-in hunting because it gave hunters an unfair advantage. Drones were restricted for similar reasons.

I am confident the non-hunting public would be shocked to learn that hunters on public land can legally pursue highly elusive big game while monitoring dozens of live-feed cameras from an electronic device.

This level of electronic surveillance is inconsistent with fair-chase ethics. I respectfully urge action to address the excessive and inappropriate use of trail cameras on public land.

Glenn DelaBarre