



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | Pheasant Hunting Marketing Workgroup and Plan

OVERVIEW | Workgroup Objective

In early 2020, the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks teamed up with the South Dakota Department of Tourism to develop a workgroup that would produce a robust pheasant hunting marketing plan aimed at increasing resident and nonresident participation in the state's world-class pheasant hunting opportunities. The workgroup was established in early February and consisted of four GFP Commissioners, two Governor's Office staff, three Tourism staff, six GFP staff, and one representative each from the SD Retailers Association, the SD Wildlife Federation and Second Century Habitat Fund Board. The group's role was to serve in an advisory capacity by offering insight, ideas, and alternatives to increase resident and nonresident participation in South Dakota pheasant hunting and then evaluate the final marketing plan developed by the two state departments.

PHASE 1 DISCOVERY AND RESEARCH | February and March 2020

Phase 1 took up the bulk of the work in terms of researching an effective way to produce a marketing plan while gathering key insights from workgroup members. On February 18, 2020, the workgroup met for the first time in Pierre to analyze and understand the current marketing and demographic landscape, what is working and not working, review the Tourism marketing budget, assess competition overview and license sales (residents and nonresidents). It was mentioned in the opening remarks that this would now be a shift for GFP – going from strategic messaging to a long-term marketing plan focused on growth and relevancy.

Tourism then defined how a marketing strategy is built through these five pillars:

1. Audiences – customer/visitor profiles
2. Markets – geographic states or cities
3. Creative – how we speak to our audience
4. Timing – when to hit the target audiences effectively
5. Media - how the message is delivered

The goal for each of these pillars is to produce the right message, with the right audience at the right time.

Tourism also addressed key factors to consider in market selection; including: drive time and distance, past interest/engagement, length of time in the market, competition, media cost,



target population, market economy, geographic attributes, and national trends in regards to hunting interest and participation.

The group then transitioned to how relevancy and the R3 movement (recruitment, retention and reactivation) must remain front and center. Diversifying the audience base was something that this workgroup paid close attention to while ensuring that as the plan was developed, the departments identify data and behavior trends to produce results.

This time period also focused on how the annual brood survey results impacted hunter outreach and planning. The workgroup members charged GFP to re-evaluate how and if the survey should be conducted each year; in addition to assessing how results should be shared with the public.

PHASE 2 RESEARCH FINDINGS, STRATEGY AND AUDIENCE INSIGHTS | April 2020

The group reconvened on April 23 via Zoom video conference to present the research findings of the lapsed hunter audience while sharing information on the key performance indicators (KPIs) that would drive short-term growth in the next 6 months.

The KPIs, all of which are measurable, were sent, presented and reviewed by the workgroup and include: increase traffic to gfp.sd.gov by 10%; increase GFP email subscribers via the “Sign Up for Email Notifications” option on the GFP website by 15%; and increase social media followers on Facebook and Instagram (via social media influencer campaign) by 10% all by Dec. 14, 2020. This date was selected because it is the end of the license year. Auto-renewal is a feature that kicks in on Dec. 15 of each year. It was noted that the long-term success indicator will rest with the ability to increase the number of resident and non-resident small game licenses over the next three years (*note: at the time of distribution this percentage increase was currently being evaluated and compiled*). Additionally, the departments will use a data tracking software to ensure each message is driven by consumer insights and sentiments.

During this meeting, the departments also provided a brief overview of current public relations tactics that would complement the paid media efforts. This includes sharing good news stories from across the country as it relates to pheasant hunting in South Dakota on social media platforms and with target audiences as appropriate; which is a tactic Chairman Jensen advocated for.

This is also where the group was presented with five audience profiles (traditionalist, naturalist, adventure hunter, lapsed youth and high-end hunters) that they then cut down to three.



Commissioner input was critical in the selection of the three audience groups selected:

- Traditionalist | Resident and Non-resident | Age: 45-64 | Income: \$80,000+
- Adventure Hunters | Resident and Non-resident | Age: 18-44 | Income: \$50,000+
- Lapsed Youth | Resident and Non-resident | Age: 18-35 | Income: \$30,000-\$40,000

Another in-depth discussion pertaining to the brood survey process and information sharing was discussed. Commissioners and workgroup members actively supported a change to reporting the statewide pheasant per mile index to ensure that South Dakota is not unintentionally deterring hunters from coming to our state based on the media headlines reporting of low bird numbers. This then shifted to the suggestions made by Commissioner Whitmyre to ensure we are actively promoting the rooster to hen ratio and sharing the harvest surveys from the previous year in a more visible way.

PHASE 3 DEVELOP AND DELIVER A PLAN | May 2020

Based on the information gathered and presented in the months prior, the two departments then worked to develop and deliver a marketing plan for the workgroup to evaluate on May 18, in conjunction with the initial workgroup timeline and deliverables as outlined in the project charter.

This marketing plan was developed to ensure that South Dakota is THE best place to hunt pheasants even when the pheasant population may be down due to habitat or weather-related factors. The creative part of the plan intends to emotionally connect with hunters (and other user groups) through story-telling, brand awareness and relevancy while tapping into the user experience in order to evaluate the return on investment through money, values and time.

The integrated marketing campaign that was presented via video conference is complete with placement, promotion, partnering, pricing and positioning using print, digital, social media, radio, email marketing and partnerships based on research and relevancy within the defined audiences and KPIs. Direct mail is not included per previous input from Commissioner Sharp. The paid campaign efforts are coupled with department related public relations tactics and messaging. This plan has not yet included detailed public relations tactics connected to the brood survey, as a strategic communications plan will be developed in house for this piece and any potential changes to the pheasant hunting season structure.

The plan presented indicated that each department will invest \$350k each year (total of \$700k/year) over the next three years for incremental growth through 2022. The concept was



based on feedback from the workgroup that South Dakota remains the greatest place to hunt pheasants and has the highest harvest count than any other state in the country. It also focuses on the thrilling experience of pheasant hunting in South Dakota by making it accessible to anyone.

HUNT THE GREATEST

South Dakota is home to the most pheasants in the nation. This is where you hunt the greatest land, live the greatest traditions, and make the greatest memories.

All Audiences Tactics and Cost Estimates:

- Nationwide social media influencer campaign = \$17k
- Scheels partnership (stores in key markets) = \$31k
- Paid social media to ensure booking messages reach those who will purchase a license = \$18k
- KFAN radio (30 second spots) and Meateater podcast (60 second midroll reads) = \$51k
- KFAN radio (outdoor and sports programming to Vikings fan base) = \$19k
- Addressable digital media for 1:1 audience specific marketing = \$42k
- Paid search, always-on approach to targeting users using key hunting phrases = \$50k
- PR (media pitches, hosted hunts, press trips, strategic national partnerships) = \$6k
- National HuntStand Partnership = \$71k

Traditionalists Tactics:

- Pheasants Forever National Sponsorship = \$115k
 - It was also mentioned by Savannah Hendricks that we look into including the specific youth publication offered by Pheasants Forever and target the lapsed youth audience.

Traditionalists and Adventure Hunter Tactics:

- Programmatic cable TV (SD, MN, NE, WI, IA) = \$129k
 - Commissioner Sharp also directed the team to research cable TV options and that is something currently being reviewed.

Lapsed Youth and Adventure Hunter Tactics:

- Meateater podcast = \$32k
- Retarget users who visited the campaign site with a conversion message to draw them back = \$41k



Additionally, workgroup members provided feedback on other ideas that could be incorporated into the marketing plan. In the pages ahead, a recap of those ideas and their status has been documented. This information was also shared with workgroup members in early May and was presented during the video conference on May 18, 2020.

WORKGROUP IDEAS	STATUS
Market late season pheasant hunting opportunities.	This is an area that the departments are committed to and will use the tactics above to carry out.
Re-market the approach to sharing information on the pheasant brood survey. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight the rooster to hen ratio and the post season survey- underutilized resource. 	This is also an area that GFP is committed to. Ahead of any public announcement of the proposed enhancements to the survey and the season structure, a thoughtful communications approach will be developed. In 2020, we will begin to highlight the harvest data. Preliminary results are being reviewed.
Assess what role other state agencies play, like GOED and Ag or what the Governor can do to mobilize all state employees to become active in this conversation.	Right now, it is unknown what role the Governor will play, but we see her being a lead spokesperson for all audiences, in particular women. Once the campaign launches, we will determine the appropriate <i>ask</i> to fulfill this request.
Develop an application that connects hunters with landowners to help with accessing available land for hunting opportunities.	This came up in a conversation with the two departments ahead of the workgroup launching as well. This is something we will continue to assess, but the time, resources and funding may not be readily available.
Consider online advertising (engaging businesses by selling them ads).	Earlier this year, Chairman Jensen asked the department to assess online advertising techniques and what the potential for selling ads could look like to cross-market, raise revenue, and develop relationships. A six page analysis was developed by GFP and sent on March 30, 2020, to Chairman Jensen. It was then shared with Commissioners Olson, Sharp and Whitmyre that



	<p>same day and resent on April 24, 2020. Commissioner Sharp responded that same day that he would “speak to PH to see if they have seen this type of effort in any other state.” GFP stands by for additional feedback or recommended next steps.</p>
<p>Routine discussion topic at every Commission meeting.</p>	<p>This is something that both departments will commit to seeing through while providing updated reports on campaign progress.</p>
<p>Align specific and proven public relations strategies with the paid marketing efforts to further promote pheasant hunting in South Dakota.</p>	<p>Both departments intend to carry out specific public relations strategies. This information has been shared at each workgroup meeting on messaging and tactics currently used. Public relations strategies change and will adapt depending on the internal and external factors impacting both departments’ missions.</p>
<p>Continuous engagement of the private shooting preserve program and operators.</p>	<p>GFP continued this discussion with program staff and leadership on opportunities to do this; including:</p> <p>Partner with the local Chambers of Commerce and/or Visitors Bureaus to list their information on gfp.sd.gov that would link users to commercial hunting opportunities through the chamber lists while leveraging what other communities are doing. Commissioner Sharp mentioned a county by county link.</p> <p>Enhance the online user experience by outlining options to basic questions to help individuals or families plan their next hunting, fishing or outdoor adventure in South Dakota.</p> <p>Partner with private shooting preserve operators (PSP) to retain their high-end clients while tapping</p>



	<p>in the new groups of hunters that GFP is targeting with their marketing efforts.</p> <p>Discussions will continue to be evaluated in another stakeholder setting with preserve operators yet this year.</p>
<p>Produce more GFP educational videos; podcasts; presentations by GFP staff including COs to local sporting and civic groups; new ways to communicate pheasant facts and figures; and provide story-telling activities from hunters.</p>	<p>These are efforts that we will continue to expand on to run parallel with the paid media campaign upon launch. Specifically, a new campaign video and commercial will be available for sharing.</p>
<p>Payments to youth to bring in pheasant feathers to GFP (like the bounty program).</p>	<p>This idea was mentioned, but no real discussion on its potential was had and it is unknown if this is something that could move forward.</p>
<p>Promotional efforts with local communities and main streets; “costumes” like the four presidents from Mt. Rushmore out here that travel across the country.</p>	<p>Promotional efforts with local communities are available through the Tourism marketing co-op program and we also intend to develop a media kit that can be used and shared with Chambers and commercial hunting operations. It is unknown if “costumes” will be developed.</p>
<p>Booths and other participation at high school and college events; participation at parades and other events (Hobo Day, Dakota Days, St. Patrick’s Day parades and 4th of July parades).</p>	<p>This is an area that will need further review and discussion, but could serve well in the area of new partnerships and exposure.</p>
<p>GFP vehicle messaging – mobile billboard, clothing, hunter surveys.</p>	<p>This will need further discussion to carry out effectively and with purpose.</p>
<p>Modifications to reporting results of the annual pheasant brood survey.</p>	<p>Focus messaging and reporting of survey results to regions instead of statewide pheasants per mile. Replace current local area approach (13 areas) with seven reporting regions. Change comparison time frame from 10 years to 5 years.</p> <p>Include a categorical hunting forecast based on the regional pheasants per mile value.</p>



The plan will launch in late June 2020 and will continue through 2022. It will be evaluated at least quarterly, if not monthly, through detailed performance reports.

In closing, the information presented here provides a summary of the thoughtful insights shared throughout the time the workgroup was formed. The feedback, concerns and input helped develop a long-term marketing plan that will increase resident and nonresident pheasant hunters over the next three years. Everyone who participated in the workgroup came to the table with expertise and a passion for the subject matter.