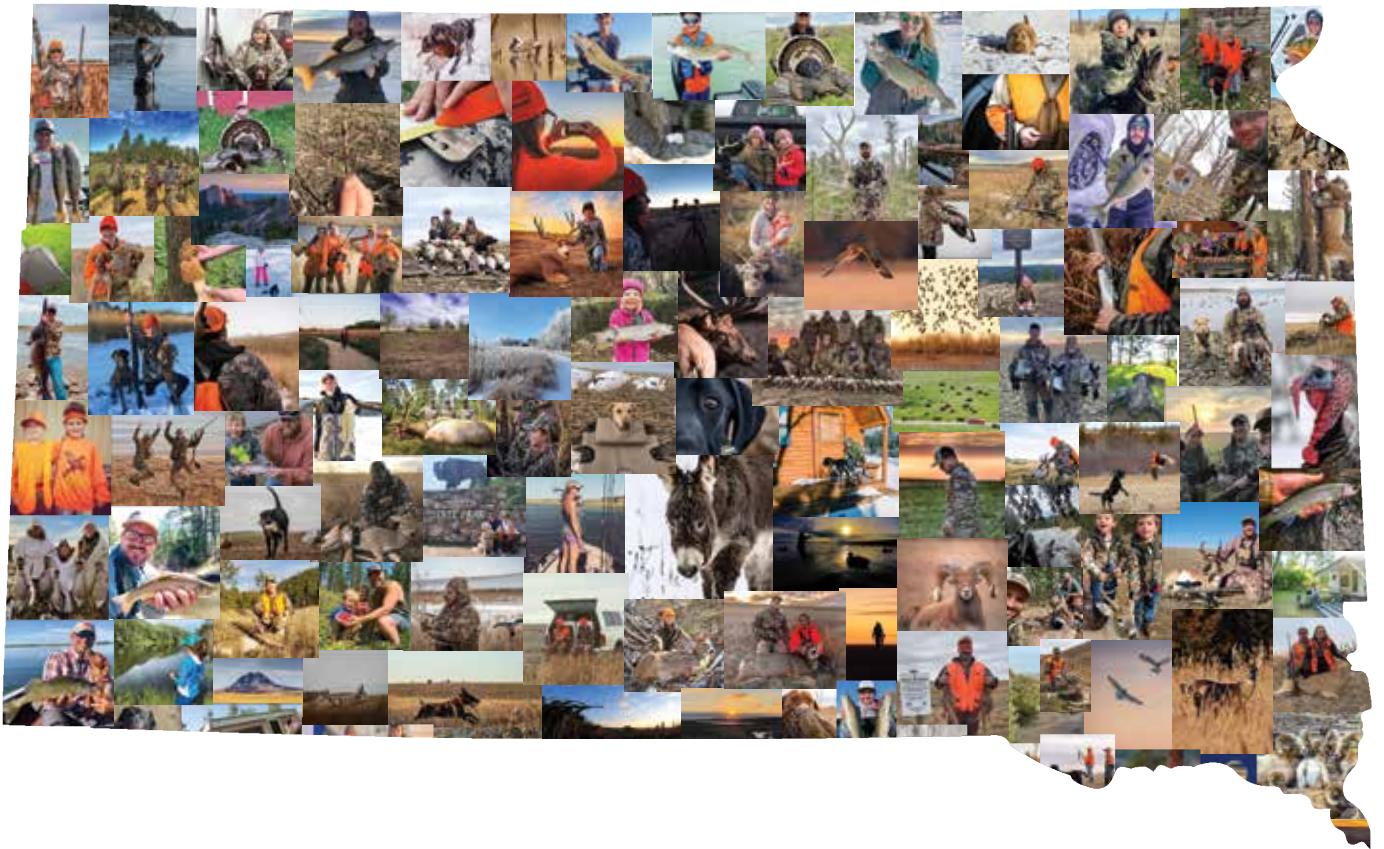


# SOUTH DAKOTA GAME, FISH & PARKS

## 2021 Annual Report





## Hey Folks!

As we look back on 2021, it was a very exciting year for the South Dakota outdoors. Anglers hitting the water enjoyed incredible fishing, our parks had a record setting year for camping and visitations, great big game, pheasant and waterfowl hunting. South Dakota's outdoor resources and opportunities are second to none and it is incredibly important that the Department strives each and everyday to provide these resources and outdoor opportunities for current and future generations.

The outdoors are my passion and I cannot express how thankful and proud I am to be a part of Team GFP.

The outdoors are open and open to everyone. Our parks are full of visitors, we are working hard to recruit, retain, and reactivate hunters, anglers, and trappers, while ensuring we remain transparent in our financial future and where the money goes, but most importantly, we are striving to ensure the outdoor traditions we enjoy in South Dakota remain strong for future generations.

We took a hard look at where we are headed in 2021, and because of this, we have a new mission:

**We serve and connect people and families to the outdoors through effective management of our state's parks, fisheries and wildlife resources.**

The next question you may ask is, how are we going to do this? We identified four priorities that will guide Team GFP into the future.

One of the most critical priorities is **Habitat and Access**. If we are going to recruit, retain, and reactivate hunters, anglers, campers and trappers, they need places where they can enjoy these activities. Habitat is the foundation to wildlife management and is the key ingredient for abundant wildlife populations. Just as important as habitat is ensuring people have access to these areas; not just now, but for generations to come.

Another priority is **Asset Management**. We are privileged to have a world-class state park system in South Dakota. Visitors enjoy first-class recreational experiences whether they are camping, fishing, hiking, or hunting, and we strive every day to keep it that way.

**Customer Service** will continue to remain a priority for as long as I am serving in this role. We operate a user pay, user benefit system. This means our hunters, anglers, trappers and visitors are our lifeblood. Ensuring we deliver excellent customer service and meet our customers where they are will help us to continue to grow and foster the creation of outdoor families, which benefits everyone who enjoys South Dakota's resources.

Rooted in all of this is our priority of **Operational Excellence**. Accomplishing what we set out to do is a team effort, and we need everyone on our team striving to make a positive difference each day. By offering increased skills training, enhanced internal communications, effective recruitment and onboarding tactics, we will continue to strengthen and maximize Team GFP's productivity.

Our natural resources are second to none here. Whether individuals want to enjoy the greatest pheasant hunting in the country, spend time in our world-class state parks, or simply relax and enjoy time outdoors, we want everyone to feel welcomed as they make memories.

**Serve. Connect. Manage.** Thank you for supporting conservation and ensuring our outdoor traditions remain strong for current and future generations.

**KEVIN ROBLING**  
GFP Secretary

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Go Outdoors South Dakota .....	45
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# EMPLOYEE INFORMATION

- 488 PERMANENT STAFF
- 496 SEASONAL WORKERS
- 152 SUMMER INTERNS
- 440+ VOLUNTEERS

*Each year, our staff work tirelessly to collaborate across department lines, with local, state, and national partners along with private landowners. Through this, they accomplish new priorities and tackle other challenges without hesitation or complaint.*

INTEGRITY COLLABORATE STEWARDSHIP RECREATION  
FUTURE GENERATIONS  
LANDOWNERS DEDICATION EXCELLENCE

## DEPARTMENT LEADERSHIP



**KEVIN ROBLING**  
DEPARTMENT SECRETARY



**CHRIS PETERSEN**  
ADMINISTRATION  
DIRECTOR



**SCOTT SIMPSON**  
PARKS & RECREATION  
DIRECTOR



**TOM KIRSCHENMANN**  
WILDLIFE DIRECTOR



**EMILY KIEL**  
MARKETING AND  
OUTREACH DIRECTOR





# 2021 COMMISSIONERS



**RUSSELL OLSON**  
CHAIRMAN - WENTWORTH



**DOUG SHARP**  
VICE CHAIRMAN - WATERTOWN



**ROBERT WHITMYRE**  
WEBSTER



**TRAVIS BIES**  
FAIRBURN



**JON LOCKEN**  
BATH



**CHUCK SPRING**  
UNION CENTER



**STEPHANIE RISSLER**  
VERMILLION



**JULIE BARTLING**  
GREGORY

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## 2022 COMMISSION MEETING DATES

**JANUARY 4-5**

**JUNE 2-3**

**OCTOBER 6-7**

**MARCH 3-4**

**JULY 7-8**

**NOVEMBER 3-4**

**APRIL 7-8**

**SEPTEMBER 1-2**

**DECEMBER 1-2**

**MAY 5-6**

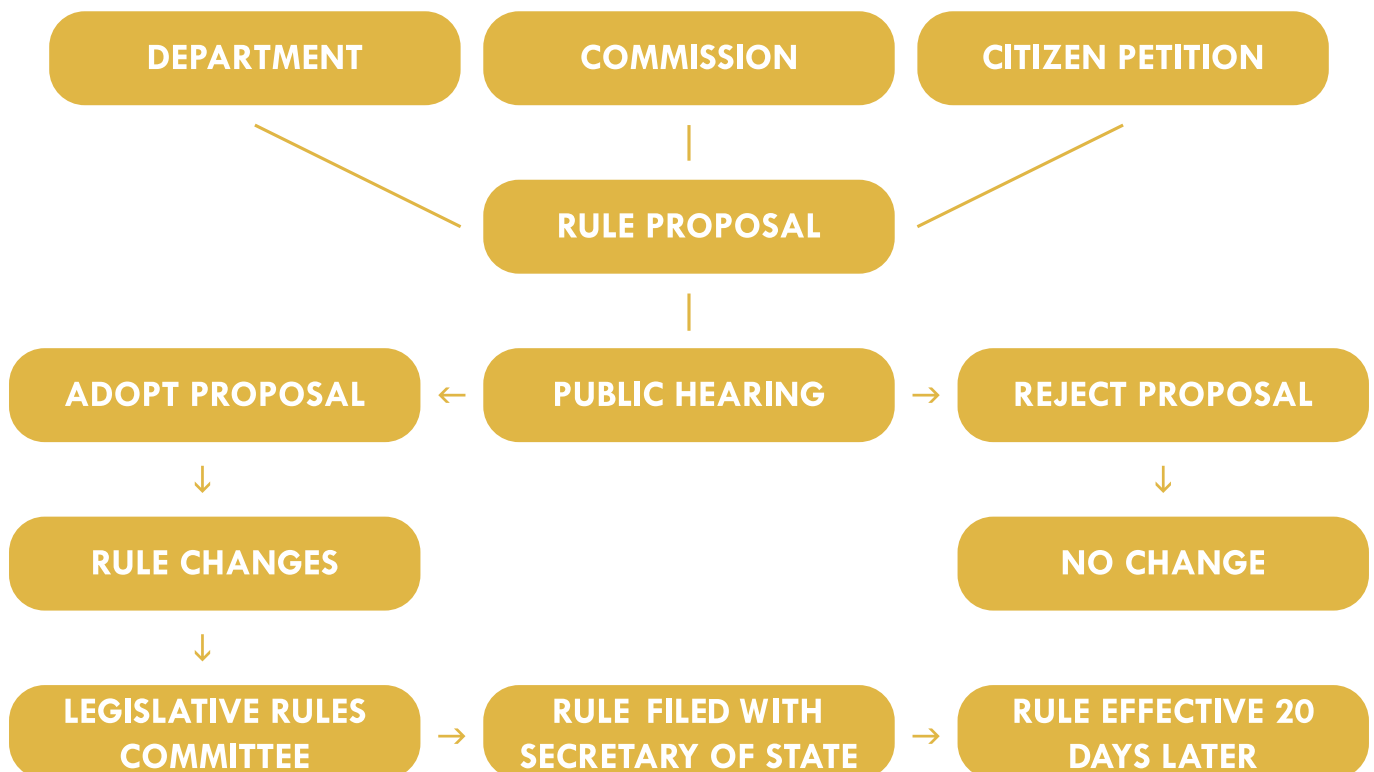
# HOW THE COMMISSION WORKS

**T**he GFP Commission is committed to fulfilling their responsibility to serve the state of South Dakota through open and transparent processes. The Commission welcomes correspondence throughout the year and encourages citizens to provide comments directly to commissioners at every commission meeting. While the commission leans heavily on the Department for the science of managing outdoor resources and recreation, public comments shape commission decisions on many issues that have social implications such as the equitable distribution of available licenses and setting of fees for access and use of state parks.

commissioners themselves can propose a change. After a proposal is made, the commission provides proper public notice of the proposed change, accept public comment and make a final decision to adopt or reject the proposal.

If adopted, all rule changes are reviewed by a committee of legislators who make sure the commission acted within their authority and that the public was given sufficient opportunity for input into the final decision. After that, the new administrative rules are filed with the Secretary of State and become effective 20 days later.

The formal process the commission uses to adopt administrative rules is typically initiated by a recommendation from the Department, but can also originate from receipt of a citizen petition, or



# WILDLIFE EXPENSES | \$59,180,000



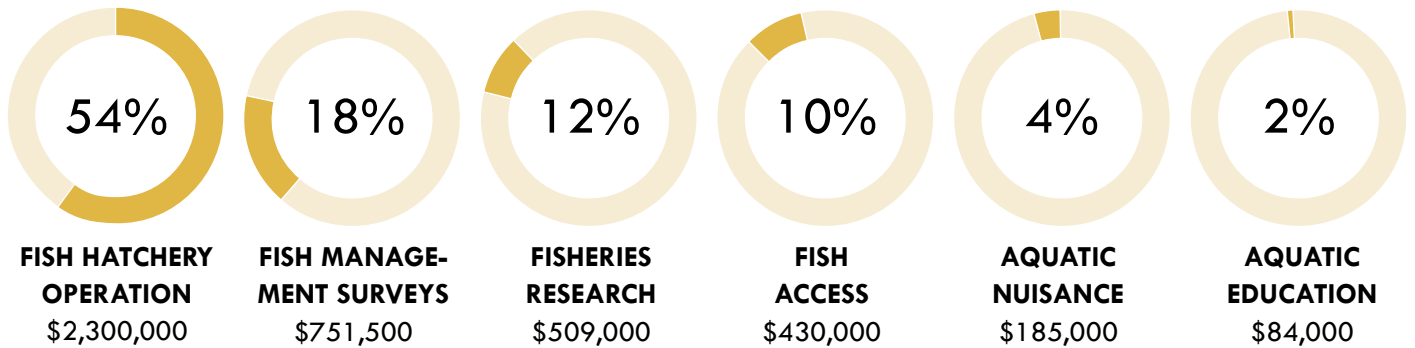
- 30% HABITAT & ACCESS | \$17,800,000
- 29% LAW ENFORCEMENT & ADMINISTRATION | \$16,950,000
- 16% WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT | \$9,700,000
- 14% FISH MANAGEMENT | \$8,225,000
- 6% CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT | \$3,500,000
- 5% SUPPORT SERVICES | \$3,005,000

# WILDLIFE REVENUE | \$59,920,000

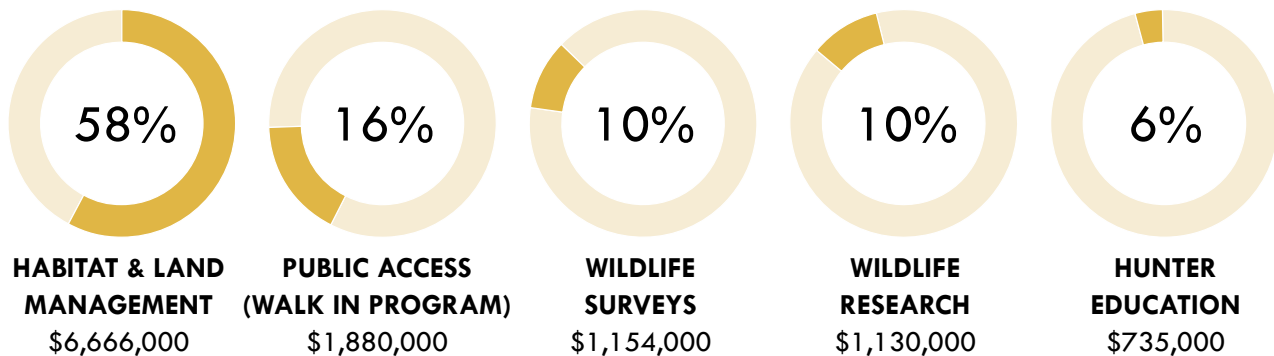


- 33% NONRESIDENT LICENSES | \$20,000,000
- 31% FEDERAL AID | \$18,770,000
- 20% RESIDENT LICENSES | \$11,750,000
- 9% HABITAT STAMP FEES | \$5,400,000
- 7% MISC. REVENUES + COUNTY ADC FUNDING | \$4,000,000

## DINGLE JOHNSON | \$4,259,500



## PITTMAN-ROBERTSON | \$11,565,000





# PARKS AND RECREATION EXPENSES | \$51,100,000



- 67% MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS | \$34,400,000
- 18% PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE | \$9,300,000
- 7% WATERBASED DEVELOPMENT | \$3,520,000
- 5% NEW DEVELOPMENT | \$2,700,000
- 2% SNOWMOBILE TRAILS | \$1,180,000

# PARKS REVENUE | \$47,315,000

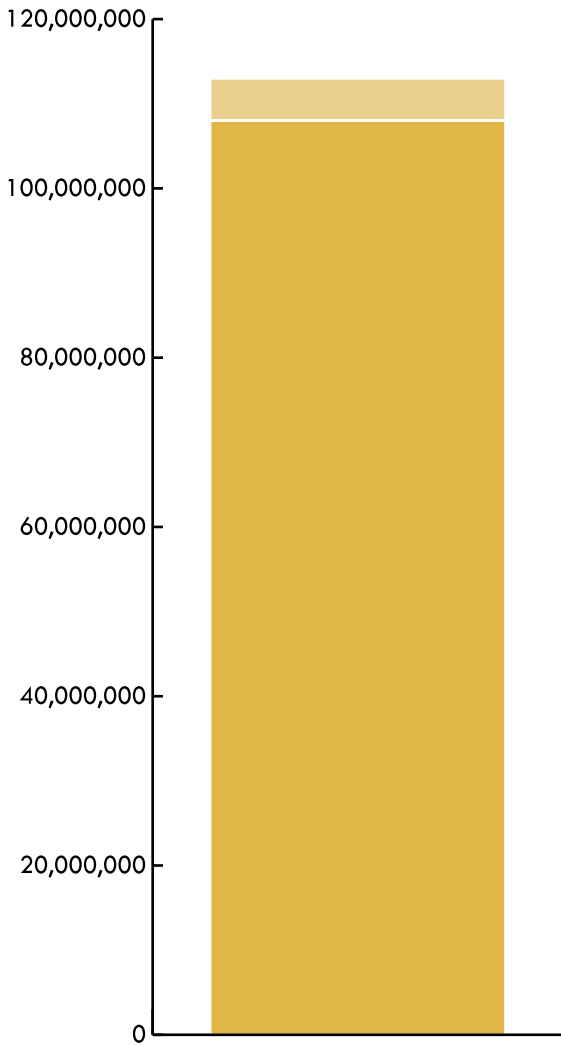


- 51.5% PARK ENTRANCE LICENSE & CAMPING FEES | \$24,350,000
- 13.3% MISCELLANEOUS | \$6,300,000
- 11.9% DEDICATED TAXES AND LICENSES | \$5,620,000
- 11.7% GENERAL FUNDS | \$5,550,000
- 9.9% FEDERAL FUNDS | \$4,690,000
- 1.7% SNOWMOBILE TRAILS LICENSES, TAXES & FEES | \$805,000

# 2021 FISH STOCKING

MIKE **BARNES** | MCNENNY FISH HATCHERY

## FISH STOCKED



**242**  
LAKES AND STREAMS STOCKED

**90%**  
OF THE POUNDS OF FISH STOCKED WERE ADULTS LARGE ENOUGH TO BE IMMEDIATELY CAUGHT BY ANGLERS.

**22**  
FISH SPECIES PRODUCED

- WALLEYE | 108 MILLION
- OTHER | 5 MILLION

Of the approximately 113 million fish stocked, 108 million were walleye fry released shortly after egg hatching.

FRY	
SPECIES	NUMBER
Walleye	101,299,300
Saugeye	800,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>102,099,300</b>

JUVENILE	
SPECIES	NUMBER
Walleye	3,617,985
Saugeye	449,180
Chinook Salmon	294,755
Atlantic Salmon	70,875
Muskellunge	3,247
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,436,042</b>

ADULT	
SPECIES	NUMBER
Rainbow Trout	78,727
Cutthroat Trout	26,081
Hybrid Sunfish	20,819
<b>Total</b>	<b>125,627</b>

# SALMON RESEARCH PROJECT

NICK HARRINGTON | COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

As famous as it is unique, Lake Oahe boasts numerous opportunities for anglers. One aspect that makes this reservoir special is it provides the only salmon fishing opportunity in South Dakota. This salmon fishery is maintained every year through spawning, rearing and stocking efforts by GFP biologists. Now, GFP is looking for ways to further enhance these efforts.



In the fall of 2020, 477 chinook salmon returned to the Whitlock Spawning Station. These fish produced 900,000 eggs, which were then transported to hatcheries for rearing. An additional 400,000 eggs from North Dakota Game and Fish put 1.3 million eggs in hatcheries across the state.



In the spring of 2021, GFP Fisheries Biologist Dylan Gravenhof partnered with Dr. Melissa Wuellner of the University of Nebraska-Kearney on a research project studying the movements of stocked chinook salmon in Lake Oahe.

The project uses sound-emitting acoustic tags to follow newly stocked chinook salmon over their first few months in Lake Oahe. These tiny tags are implanted while fish are at the hatchery and then transmit a high frequency “ping” every two minutes. These pings are monitored by underwater receivers and track the fish’s movements in real time, giving more information on what happens to these fish as soon as they are released.



After seven months of hatching and growing, approximately 300,000 juvenile salmon are stocked back into Lake Oahe. These fish will ultimately be available for anglers to catch and once mature, return back to the Whitlock Spawning Station to begin the cycle again. Now, GFP is looking for ways to increase the survival of these stocked fish.



By better understanding the life of these stocked salmon, GFP will be able to determine the best locations to release salmon, the size fish should be stocked at and even steps that could be taken at the hatchery to improve survival rates. Ultimately, this will result in a better return on investment for our salmon fishery and in turn our anglers.

# HYBRID SUNFISH PROJECT

CAMERON GOBLE  
FISHERIES BIOLOGIST

The first year of stocking hybrid Green Sunfish into 4th Street (Mickelson) Pond in Pierre has been completed. To date 5,616 hybrid sunfish (Bluegill X Green Sunfish) have been transferred from the recirculating aquaculture system (RAS) at Cleghorn Springs to 4th Street Pond. Six stocking events occurred bi-weekly throughout the summer and were associated with family fishing events. The stockings were successful in providing catch opportunities for participants. Survey data collected during the June 23, 2021 family fishing event indicates that hybrid sunfish comprised 45% of all fish captured by anglers during the event. Given that the background populations of other species (e.g. Black Bullheads, Bluegill, Black Crappie, and Channel Catfish) likely double the number of hybrid sunfish stocked (estimates of more than 8,000 Black Bullheads alone) the hybrid sunfish catch rates suggest these stockings were successful in boosting angler catch.

Likely the biggest success from the first year of this project is on the fish production side. The RAS facility at Cleghorn Springs was designed and built from the ground up to produce the hybrid sunfish for this project. The lessons learned from this development have been incorporated in expanding the production capabilities of other warm and cool water species such as Bluegill, Largemouth Bass, and Walleye at Cleghorn Springs. This system and the knowledge gained from the initial hybrid sunfish production provide a blueprint for future development of other RAS facilities elsewhere in the state.

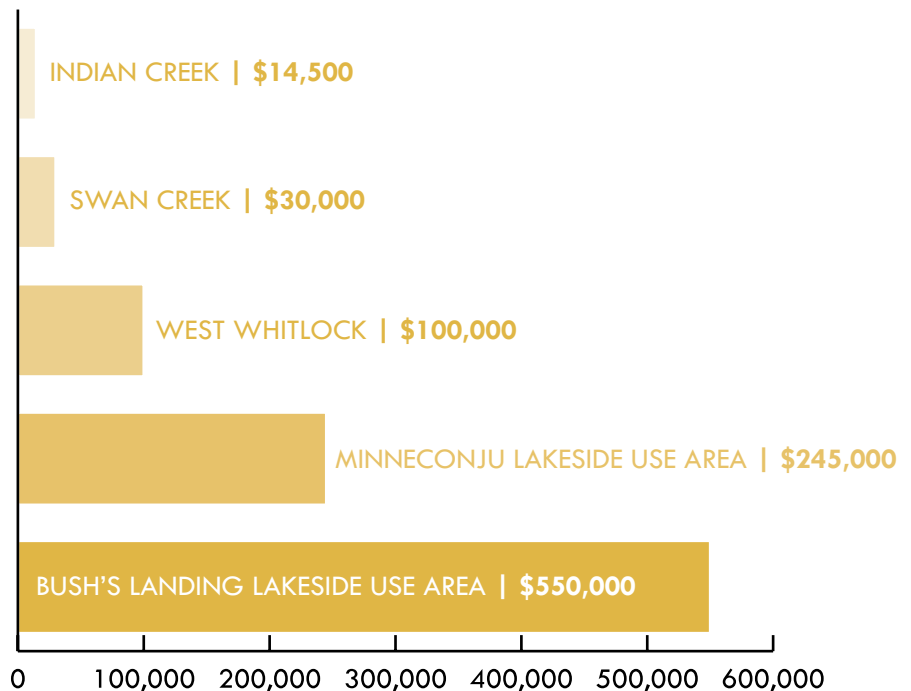
# LAKE OAHE ACCESS

ADAM KULESA | PLANNING/DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATOR

Below normal spring/summer precipitation and the lack of plains and mountain snowpack in 2020 led to lower-than-normal water levels on Lake Oahe in 2021. Levels will likely continue to drop through the end of 2021 and into spring run-offs. Low-water levels affected several boat ramp access locations on Lake Oahe in 2021 and the department will have spent approximately 1.3 million dollars on 9 different access improvements projects on Lake Oahe upon completion of fall projects during this year.

Starting in the spring, approximately \$550,000 was used to extend the low-water ramp at Bush's Landing LUA up to an elevation of 1609 restoring access to this location in early June. Smaller projects were completed at Little Bend LUA and Sutton Bay LUA to remove silt, improve launching, and restore access to low-water access ramps that have been under water since the mid-2000's.

## BOAT RAMP IMPROVEMENTS AND REPAIRS



An access restoration project is also planned this late fall/winter to improve shoreline access at our Oahe Downstream Recreation Area Group Lodge as well as improving shore/ice fishing access west of campground #3.

Staff were also able to secure an agreement with the Corps of Engineers for several shore-fishing and ice fishing access locations in and around East/West Whitlock west of Gettysburg SD.

While fluctuating water levels create access challenges, the department is committed to monitoring Lake Oahe water levels and completing access improvement projects with fiscal responsibility and the least amount of disruption to our outdoor enthusiasts.

# AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES UPDATE

TANNER DAVIS | AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES COORDINATOR

Inspections for aquatic invasive species (AIS) significantly increased in 2021. The increased inspections were in part thanks to partnerships with western South Dakota Conservation Districts and the Enemy Swim Preservation Association. In western South Dakota, funding from the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) and West Dakota Water District supported the operation of eight inspection stations at six major reservoirs in western South Dakota.

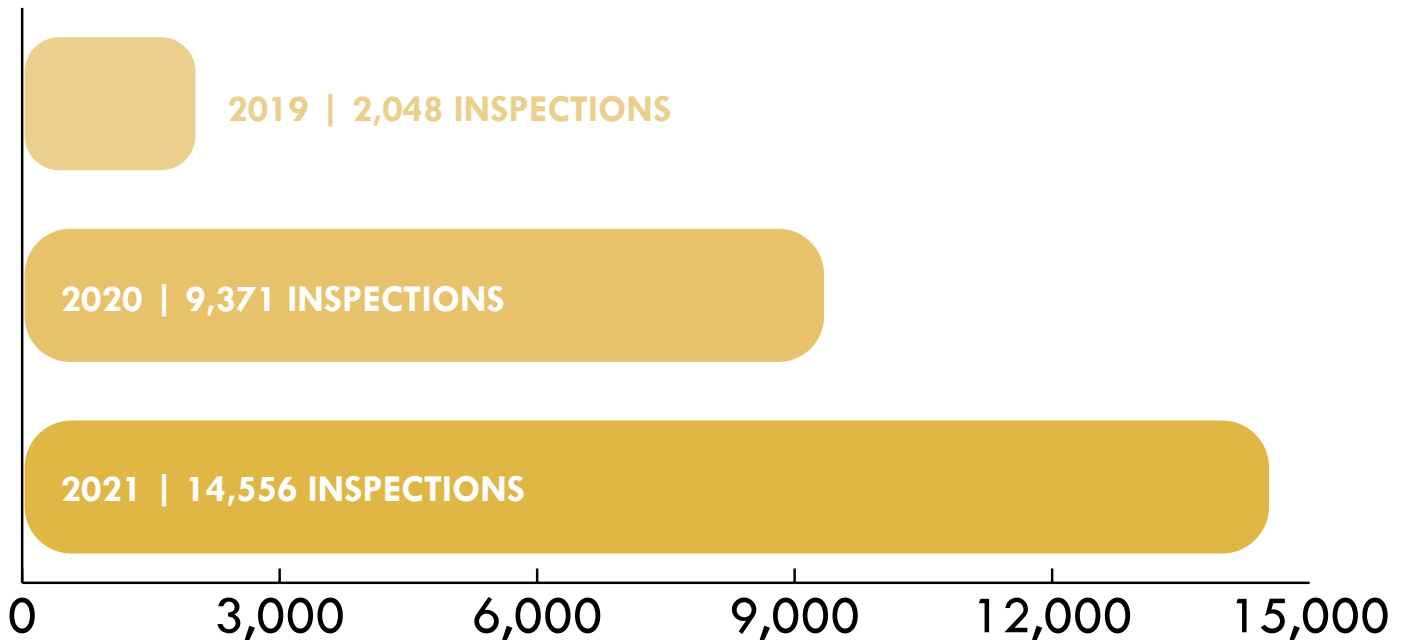
In northeast South Dakota, GFP partnered with the Enemy Swim Preservation Association to conduct an entrance inspection at Churchill boat ramp. This partnership resulted in 1,739 inspections at this ramp.

In total, 12 inspections stations were in operation across South Dakota on any given week during the summer months. With the addition of new partnerships across the state, GFP was able to significantly increase the number of personnel to 50 inspectors, plus volunteers. Additionally, GFP law enforcement officers assisted with compliance during inspections.

GFP also continued our education and outreach efforts to help educate boaters and water users on best management practices (BMP). GFP implemented geofencing with our social media platforms to deliver AIS messaging to users who entered a certain area, and for a second year in a row conducted gas station television at 42 gas stations across South Dakota. An AIS survey/giveaway was also available on the [SDLeastwanted.sd.gov](https://SDLeastwanted.sd.gov) website to better understand reasons for compliance, level of education with AIS, and thoughts on inspection station operations.

Moving forward, the AIS program plans to continue watercraft inspections and build on education and outreach to help remind boaters and anglers about these BMPs to slow the spread of AIS across the state.

## WATERCRAFT INSPECTIONS



## COMPLIANCE

183

WARNINGS ISSUED

239

CITATIONS ISSUED

91%-99%

BOAT PLUG COMPLIANCE



# DREDGING IN WESTERN SOUTH DAKOTA

JASON JUNGWIRTH

SENIOR BIOLOGIST – AQUATIC HABITAT AND ACCESS

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) has completed dredging of Canyon Lake in Rapid City. This was a cooperative effort that also involved the City of Rapid City, Western Dakota Water Development District, South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources and the Black Hills Fly Fishers. The dredging itself was conducted solely by GFP staff, which resulted in 137 days of dredge operation and almost 3,300 hours of staff time to complete the project. In total, approximately 9,000 cubic yards of material, at roughly \$17/cubic yd, was removed from this highly utilized urban fishery.

One large benefit of this project was that the dredge became the property of GFP and can be used in other waters in western South Dakota. As a result, dredging has already occurred at several other small impoundments in the area including Sunday Gulch, Wicksville Dam and the Outdoor Campus West back pond. This piece of machinery has shown to be very useful when addressing sedimentation issues in small fisheries and will be a valuable tool moving forward as GFP continues to improve fish habitat and angler access.

**137 DAYS**  
OF DREDGE OPERATION

**3,300 HOURS**  
OF STAFF TIME

**\$17/CUBIC YARD**



SIDE DUMP TRUCK LOADS OF  
MATERIAL REMOVED





# AQUATIC HABITAT STAMP PROJECTS

JASON JUNGWIRTH | SENIOR BIOLOGIST – AQUATIC HABITAT AND ACCESS

## WHITEWOOD LAKE ACCESS DEVELOPMENT

Whitewood Lake in Kingsbury County is a large, natural lake located just south of Highway 14 between Arlington and Lake Preston. Outside of the occasional hot bite, Whitewood is usually relatively quiet when it comes to angling pressure. Part of this may be because Whitewood is sandwiched between 3 mainstay fishing destinations: Lakes Thompson, Poinsett, and Sinai. Another reason may be the limited access that Whitewood has exhibited over the years. The current access at the southwest corner of the lake is small, degraded, and susceptible to flooding. With funding from the habitat stamp, that is about to change. A new access development is being planned by South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) just 1.5 miles east of the existing access that will include a new concrete boat ramp, boat dock, vault toilet, ramp lighting, and a large parking lot. The new access is scheduled to be completed in 2022, which is good timing considering the fish survey completed in July 2021 by GFP. Among all southeast South Dakota lakes surveyed in 2021, Whitewood Lake had the highest catch rate of Northern Pike, second highest catch rate of Walleye, and respectable numbers of Yellow Perch and Black Crappie. With a brand-new access coming in 2022 and strong fish populations, Whitewood Lake will be worth checking out!

## LONG LAKE ACCESS AREA

Located in northwest Codington County, 14 miles west and 6 miles north of Watertown, Long Lake has been known as a quality fishery for years, but boat access has been very limited. A large section of the lake was off limits due to a boat closure on the north end of the lake. During the May 2019 Game, Fish and Parks Commission meeting, the boating closure was lifted to allow more opportunity.

Staff began identifying an ideal location on Long Lake for a new access. Plans were developed and habitat stamp funds helped get the project off the ground. Construction on a new parking lot and boat launch began in the fall of 2020. The new boat dock was pushed into the water at the end of March, and the ramp is open for operation. Grass seeding and installation of a vault toilet finished the project.

## LAKE ALVIN

Lake Alvin, 3 miles east of Harrisburg, South Dakota in Lincoln County, has had water quality issues for many years. Numerous small-scale projects have been attempted to improve the fishery in Lake Alvin, with minimal success. As large-scale lake restorations are extremely expensive, they were not feasible until the passing of the habitat stamp through the South Dakota Legislature in 2020.

During the summer of 2019, Lake Alvin sustained major damage to the dam and spillway. The damage was part of a disaster declaration through FEMA with funds allocated to make the needed repairs or replacement. Repairs/replacement to the spillway started internal discussions about whether this may be the right time to pursue a major lake restoration. Habitat stamp funds have allowed for the restoration of Lake Alvin to be a legitimate possibility.

Restoration efforts in discussion include replacement of the dam/spillway, improving water quality through work in the watershed, improving access, and improving and increasing recreational opportunities in and around the lake. The project idea is currently in the internal discussion stage with a list of potential partners and stakeholders being developed. Discussions are also beginning with some of the identified stakeholders to start garnering support.

Moving forward, the plan is to continue stakeholder discussions and start the search for an engineering firm that specializes in full-lake restorations to ensure a successful project. A project of this magnitude will take several years to complete, so be on the lookout for future updates.

## RECRUITMENT, RETENTION AND REACTIVATION (R3)

SHALA LARSON

R3 AND RELEVANCY MANAGER

Throughout the past year, education staff from across the state worked together to create a new R3 and Education Strategic Plan. There are many exciting objectives identified in this new plan, which all focus on the recruitment, retention and reactivation of hunters, anglers, trappers and outdoor users. As we looked at past successes and lessons, it was easy to create new goals for our team.

The first objective is to create stronger and more targeted post-event evaluations which will help our team better tailor programming in the future. The second objective focuses on enhancing partnerships with higher education institutions recruiting younger generations in the hunting and fishing world is critical to ensure the long-term sustainability of outdoor recreational activities. Partnering with higher education institutions will be incredibly important to reach that demographic and introduce them to the endless opportunities we have in South Dakota. A third priority is recruiting new anglers. One of the easiest ways for new anglers to fish is from shore. That's why one of our goals is to increase awareness of shoreline access. Overall, there are numerous aspects to the new plan which will help the progression of recruitment, retention and reactivation of anglers, hunters, trappers and outdoor users.

## HUNTSAFE NUMBERS

GFP continues to work to provide HuntSAFE programming in schools across the state. Currently there are 41 schools teaching HuntSAFE in the classroom and 112 volunteer instructors provide classes across the state.

41

SCHOOLS TEACHING  
HUNTSAFE

112

VOLUNTEER  
INSTRUCTORS

## NEW REGISTRATION SYSTEM

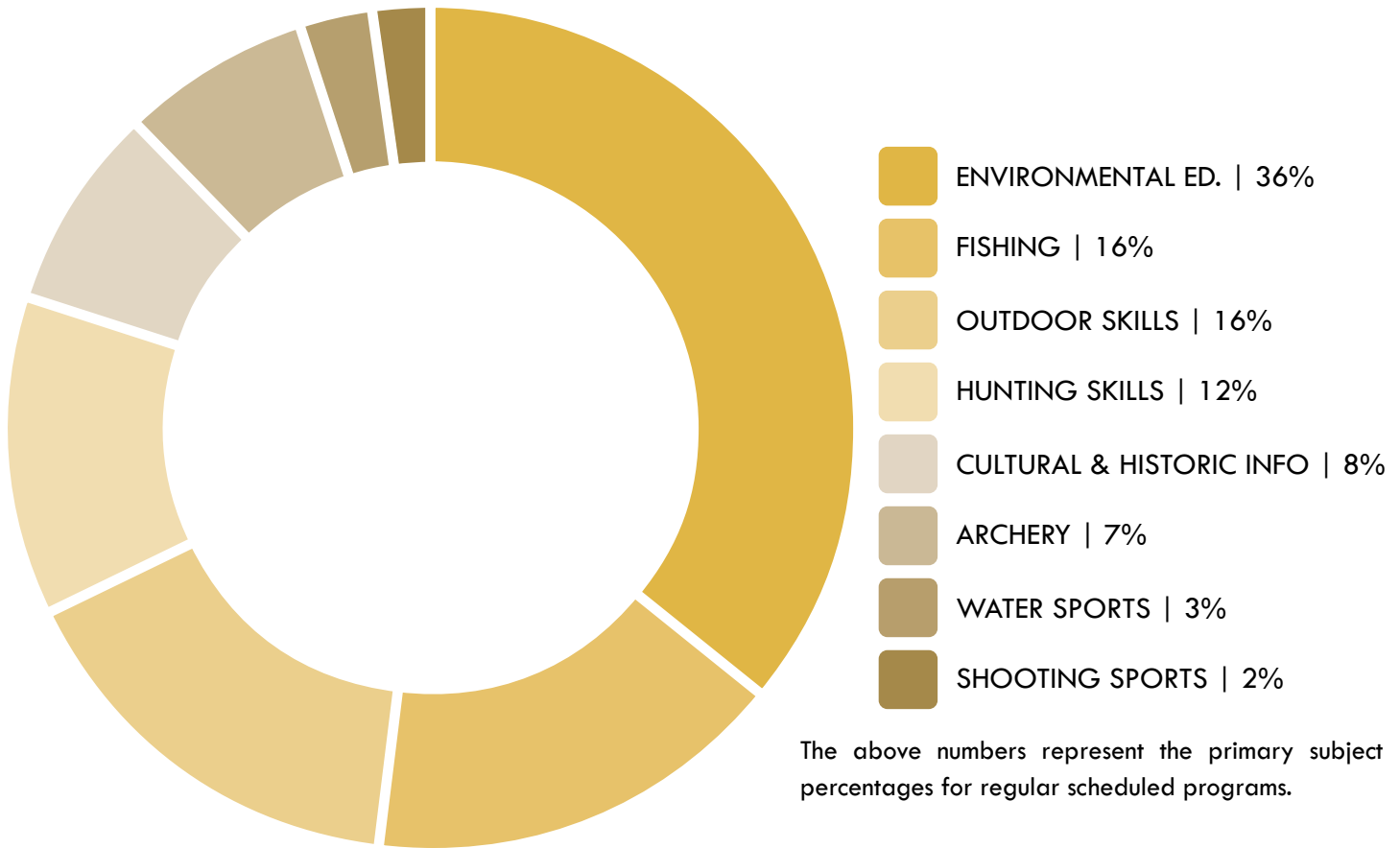
KELLY FETTIG

EDUCATION PROGRAM ASSISTANT

In June 2021, South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) implemented a new event management system for education programs organized by wildlife and administrative staff. This new system was built by Kalkomey Enterprises and was designed to make registering for programs a more user-friendly process.

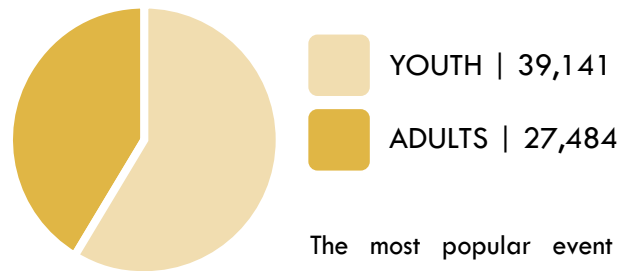
With the new system in place, instructors can now collect and organize information on all programs in one centralized spot. Instructors can gather both contact and demographic information on all participants as well as ask pre-event evaluation questions such as experience level, potential food allergies, and photo release permission. The new events management system has made the creation and evaluation of events much simpler. The Kalkomey system has also simplified the process for users - they can now go to one website and see all the classes offered statewide, search for classes based on subject matter, and link child and parent accounts together. We have seen an increase in classes being filled and have even filled classes without ever having to advertise for them. This was a much-needed process for South Dakota and brings us that much closer to being able to track users through each interaction they have with GFP in an effort to recruit, retain, and reactivate customers.

# EDUCATION AND OUTREACH



PROGRAM PROVIDER	# OF PROGRAMS
Fisheries	5
HuntSAFE	79
Law Enforcement	37
Outdoor Campus East	685
Outdoor Campus West	351
Park Staff	1,297
R3 Team	92
Wildlife and Habitat Staff	5

In 2021, GFP held 2,531 programs with 73,327 participants.



The most popular event for both youth and adults was the Fort Sisseton Historic Festival with over 6,000 adults and youth in attendance.



The GFP Education team utilizes virtual classes, in-person rotating programs and special events to provide educational opportunities to individuals across the state.

# BISON CENTER UPDATE

KOBEE **STALDER** | VISITOR SERVICES PROGRAM MANAGER



The Custer State Park Bison Center, the park's newest interpretive center, will be open summer of 2022 for visitors. The new center focuses solely on one of the biggest draws to the park, the bison herd. The Bison Center will tell the story of how the bison are uniquely managed within the park, the history of the herd, the genetics within the herd, and our biggest events each year, the Annual Governor's Buffalo Roundup and the Custer State Park Bison Auction.

Having a center at the southern end of the park at the Bison Corral Complex gives visitors a new destination and not just a spot to stop and turn around. The Bison Center will attract the buses that frequent the area, as well as the Safari Jeep Tours ran through the concessionaire in the park. There is no better place to tell the story of the park's bison herd than where managing the herd takes place. The most engaging exhibits, centers and programs in Custer State Park are ones that could not be located anywhere else; they are a mixture of real places, objects, stories, and people. The corrals are the very location where our bison story began and continues today.

By creating another piece of the story of Custer State Park, it allows visitors the opportunity to come back and learn more about the park. Visitors often learn that the park has a bison herd and that they are rounded up each year, but this center gives the park the ability to tell much more of that enriched story of the Custer State Park bison herd and will give visitors the opportunity to dive deeper and learn more about the country's national mammal.

The new center was a five-million-dollar project. Four million of that was awarded to Custer State Park through a grant from the Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust. \$500,000 of public funding was granted through the State Legislature and the remaining \$500,000 was raised by the Parks and Wildlife Foundation.

The park estimates usage of the new center to engage 150,000 – 200,000 visitors per year. Plans are for the center to be open April through the first week in November.

**\$500,000**  
PUBLIC FUNDING

**\$500,000**  
PARKS AND WILDLIFE  
FOUNDATION

**150,000+**  
VISITORS ANNUALLY

**\$4 MILLION**  
DONATION FROM  
LEONA M. AND  
HARRY B. HELMSLEY  
CHARITABLE TRUST



# CUSTER STATE PARK EXPANSION

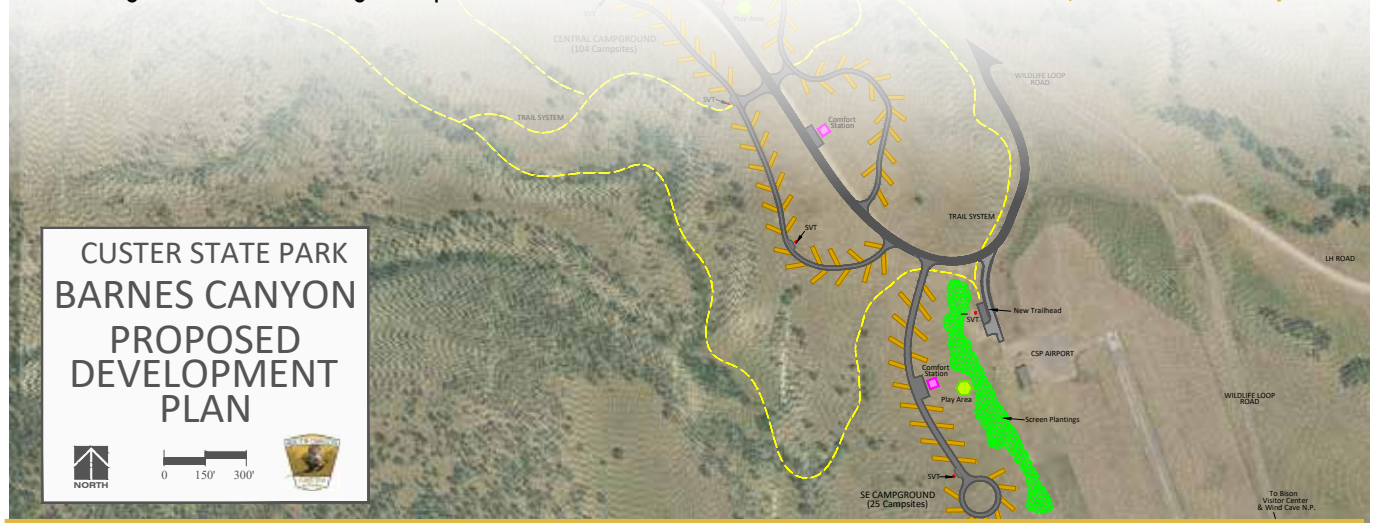
MATT **SNYDER** | REGIONAL PARK SUPERVISOR

Custer State Park is proposing a campground expansion project for the first time since 1981. In 1981, the current Sylvan Lake campground opened. The campground was moved from the day use area to its current location along Needles Highway. When looking at a new area to develop a campground, the Barnes Canyon area west of the CSP airport was identified as an ideal location. The proposed location is conducive for a campground because it is large enough, flat enough, and close enough to existing utilities while maintaining enough separation to not impact (visually or functionally) existing features in the park. Being located on the east side of the park will allow for easy access for our guests entering through East Gate and will allow them to swiftly get to their campsites. The proposed location is close enough to the Game Lodge complex that will allow

guests easy access to the Game Lodge Complex, visitor centers, hiking and biking trails, and quick access to the Wildlife Loop Road.

The proposed Barnes Canyon campground will include up to 175 campsites, four comfort stations and a number of camping cabins. A trail system is also being planned that will connect the Mickelson Trail spur at the Gordon Stockade on the west side of the park to the proposed campground and ties into the Creekside Trail that accesses the Game Lodge complex.

**Estimated use is 110 nights per sight, this creates over 19,000 additional nights of camping opportunity with additional revenue of about \$570,000 annually.**



## PARK ENTRANCE KIOSKS

JODI **BECHARD** | PARKS BUSINESS MANAGER

The year 2020 changed the world and South Dakota Parks System has seen that in numerous areas. People want to recreate in the outdoors, and many want to recreate at times that are convenient to them and sometimes, that means outside of the times when someone is at an entrance booth.

Throughout the summer of 2021, most parks and recreation areas hired a new helper to let visitors do just that, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The South Dakota Parks system brought 96 kiosks into the system that allow visitors to use a credit card at the park entrances to purchase daily and annual park entrance licenses and in some areas, firewood, for their stays.

In a day and age that many people no longer carry around cash, we have made life just a little less stressful in the parks. Between May and October of 2021, these kiosks

have collected just a little over \$738,000 on daily and annual park entrance licenses and firewood.

GFP offers many ways to purchase a Park Entrance License. Online offers an annual and daily option and we're still happy to greet you at any park or GFP Office, if you still prefer a smile.



# SPRING CREEK RECREATION AREA RENOVATIONS

SHANE **SWENSON** | SPRING CREEK PARK MANAGER

ANNA **KLINGBEIL** | SPRING CREEK ASSISTANT PARK MANAGER

Over the last year, our visitors at Spring Creek Recreation Area will have noticed quite a few exciting changes and upgrades. Since South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) acquired the entirety of the property in 2020, there has been no shortage improvements being done. One of the largest and most visible projects was the removal of the old C-Dock in the Marina, and the installation of a new Meeco Sullivan dock that includes new 60ft slips to accommodate larger houseboats. This was a welcome improvement for boat owners, and all seven of the new 60ft slips were filled this summer.

In addition to the noticeable upgrades on the water, the Spring Creek Restaurant got quite an overhaul as well. Major plumbing improvements were made to the kitchen, and the addition of two new refrigerated appliances, a new walk-in cooler chilling system, and a stainless-steel wall modernized and greatly improved the restaurants functionality. Although not as visible as other projects this was a greatly needed modernization that will increase the restaurants capability and efficiency for future concessioners. A completely rebuilt elevated deck and new carpeting in the dining room help freshen up the restaurant while still offering Spring Creeks captivating views of Oahe. An ADA lift will be installed in the entryway of the

restaurant by the end of winter, ensuring accessibility for all patrons and visitors.

Below the restaurant, the Spring Creek Convenience Store saw a huge overhaul during the winter of 2020 and 2021 as well. A complete interior renovation was completed by park staff, including new flooring, new plumbing fixtures, new countertops and cabinets, and a new heating and cooling system. A new bait tank is scheduled to be installed and operational for spring to compliment the new bait cooler already in place. One unique feature of the store upgrades comes in the form of the shiplap used to accent the walls of the convenience store. This was repurposed from material salvaged from the C-Dock renovation earlier that year. The store will be able to serve customers with everything from area park information, campground reservation, park entrance licenses, snacks, bait, and more.

Cabin 10 also received a major facelift. This included a new foundation, new flooring, siding, windows, a new deck and interior fixtures. This renovated cabin is now our most popular lodging option for families, and outdoor enthusiast of all types. This was the first of many scheduled cabin renovations to happen in the coming years.





# PARKS VISITATION REACHES NEW HEIGHTS

**77%** of reviewers rated their camping experience as an “A” with **43 out of 48 areas** receiving the top rating.

The systems **4,400+** campsites, **225** cabins, and **7** group lodges saw over **394,000** user nights.

CUSTER STATE PARK  
**2.3 MILLION VISITATIONS**

STATE PARK SYSTEM  
**8,437,361 VISITATIONS**

**3%**  
INCREASE IN VISITATION FROM 2020

**25%**  
INCREASE IN VISITATION OVER THE 9-YEAR AVERAGE

**115,021+** annual park entrance licenses were purchased along with more than **350,910** temporary park entrance licenses.

## TOP 10 MOST VISITED PARKS IN 2021

1. **CUSTER STATE PARK**
2. **LEWIS & CLARK RECREATION AREA**
3. **SPRING CREEK RECREATION AREA**
4. **OAHE DOWNSTREAM RECREATION AREA**
5. **COW CREEK RECREATION AREA**
6. **ANGOSTURA RECREATION AREA**
7. **ROY LAKE STATE PARK**
8. **FARM ISLAND RECREATION AREA**
9. **SPRINGFIELD RECREATION AREA**
10. **NEWTON HILLS STATE PARK**

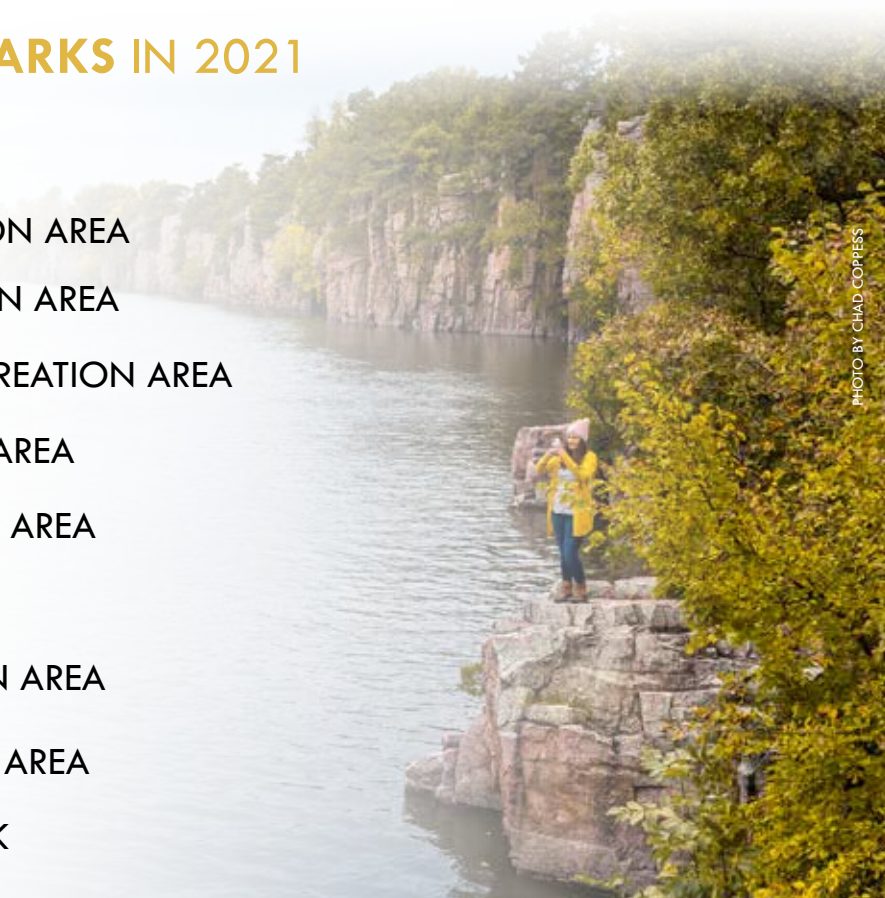
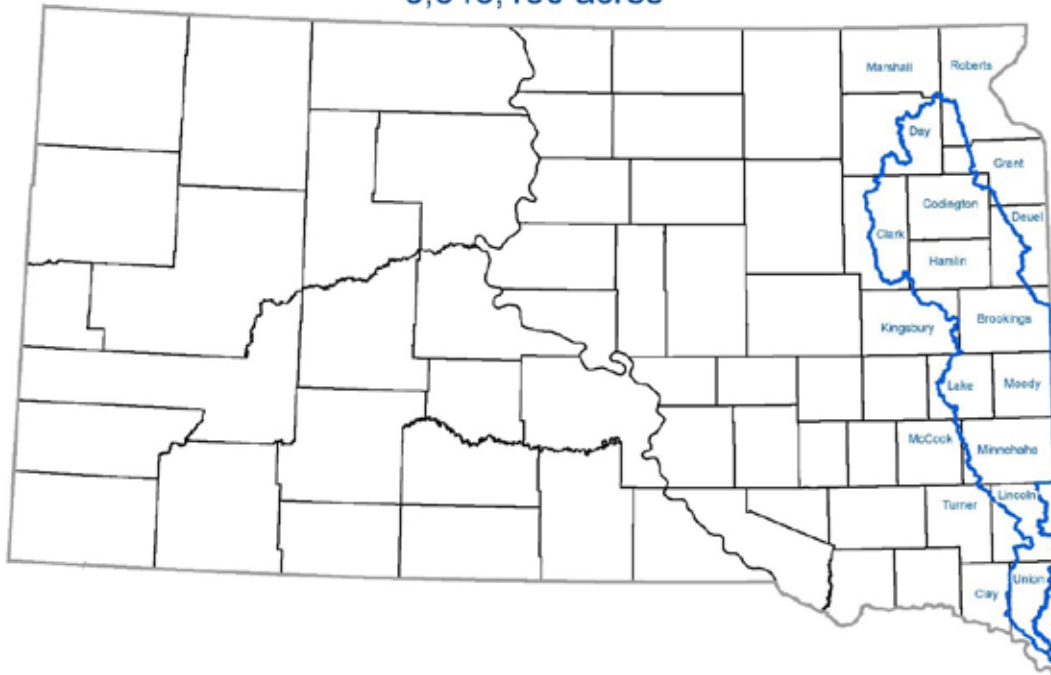


PHOTO BY CHAD COPPES

# BIG SIOUX RIVER WATERSHED CONSERVATION RESERVE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM (CREP)

MARK NORTON | HUNTING ACCESS & FARM BILL COORDINATOR

## South Dakota Big Sioux Watershed CREP Area 3,848,130 acres



The State of South Dakota is working with USDA to create a new Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) project for the Big Sioux River Watershed (BSRW). This effort is being led by South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) and modeled after the existing and highly successful James River Watershed CREP. Up to 25,000 acres of marginal cropland and pastureland will be enrolled in the BSRW CREP. The project's purpose will be to

improve and protect water quality for drinking water and recreation use, restore wildlife habitat leading to increased populations of pheasants, deer, waterfowl, grassland nesting songbirds and pollinators like the monarch butterfly, create additional sources of forage for livestock producers, and improve the quality of life in South Dakota by creating approximately 250 new places open to public hunting and fishing access within the BSRW. All land enrolled will be open to public hunting and fishing access. Landowners, farmers, and ranchers will enroll land with the assistance of Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Pheasants Forever and GFP staff. CREP contracts will be for 10 to 15 years with a total project cost estimated at \$108,826,950. The State's portion of that total cost is estimated to be \$22,215,600. GFP will be funding the state's portion of the project cost and is seeking partnership funding of up to \$750,000 per year.



# GAME PRODUCTION AREA DISPOSALS

**PAUL COUGHLIN**

TERRESTRIAL HABITAT PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR

In addressing its responsibilities to manage South Dakota's fish and wildlife resources and provide recreational access to those resources, South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) often utilizes land acquisitions to purchase and manage Game Production Areas (GPA) as wildlife habitat and public hunting areas. Since the 1930's GFP has acquired more than 281,000 acres of GPA across South Dakota, managing these areas specifically for wildlife habitat and public hunting access. Over time however, conditions can change whereby certain GPAs no longer provide the wildlife habitat or public hunting opportunities they once did. Through SDCL 41-2-29.1 the South Dakota legislature granted GFP authority to dispose of GPAs when these situations arise.

In 2021, GFP staff identified six GPAs for disposal. These GPAs were evaluated based on ease of public access and use, wildlife habitat management opportunities, access to public waters, location to other public lands and waters, wildlife use, surrounding landscape, and tract size. Appraisals to determine each GPA's fair market value were performed. At its July 2021 meeting, the GFP

Commission through a Resolution determined these six GPAs no longer serve the purposes for which they were originally acquired, were no longer needed for game, fish and park purposes, and directed GFP to dispose of the properties per SDCL § 41-2-29.1. Public notices were issued, and subsequent public auctions were held in September at which all properties were sold.

As directed by the GFP Commission in their July 2021 Resolution, funds derived from the GPA sales are to be directed to acquiring other property more suited to GFP purposes and the needs of our constituents. One example of this is a project involving an opportunity to acquire the 224 acre Newton Hills Boy Scout Camp as an addition to GFP's existing Johnson/McKee GPA complex and Newton Hills State Park in Lincoln County. This project serves as a high-profile example of how funds derived from GPA disposals can be directed to acquiring other lands with wildlife habitat management opportunities and high public recreation use potential consistent with GFP strategic plan objectives.

GPA	COUNTY	ACRES	APPRAISED VALUES	AUCTION SALE PRICE
W. LAKE POINSETT	HAMLIN	40	\$100,000	\$520,000
MALLARD SLOUGH	BEADLE	80	\$56,000	\$56,000
SCHARTNER DITCH	TURNER	10	\$30,000	\$75,000
SOUTH BUFFALO LAKE	MARSHALL	60	\$48,000	\$48,000
MONDRY	DAY	7.5	\$112,500	\$265,000
NORTH SANBORN	SANBORN	51	\$137,000	\$137,000

TOTAL ACRES

248.5

APPRAISED VALUES

\$483,500

AUCTION SALE PRICE

\$1,101,000





# PRIVATE LAND PUBLIC HUNTING ACCESS PROGRAM SUMMARY

## 2021 PROGRAM SUMMARY

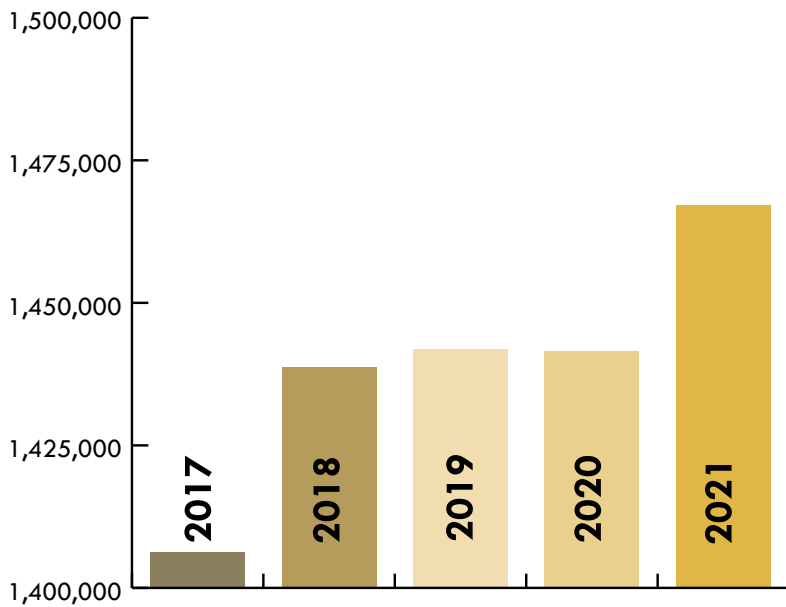


- 1,506** | WALK-IN AREA (WIA)
- 445** | JAMES RIVER WATERSHED CONSERVATION RESERVE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM
- 22** | CONTROLLED HUNTING ACCESS PROGRAM (CHAP)
- 13** | ELK HUNTING ACCESS AREA
- 6** | LOWER OAHÉ WATERFOWL ACCESS AREA

**\$5,960,000**  
TOTAL PAYMENTS TO LANDOWNERS

**1,467,094**  
TOTAL ACRES ENROLLED

## PRIVATE LAND PUBLIC HUNTING ACCESS PROGRAM ACRES



**\$28.7 MILLION 5 YEAR TOTAL PAYMENTS TO LANDOWNERS**

## HABITAT AND ACCESS OVERVIEW

To meet fish and wildlife resource stewardship responsibilities and provide opportunities for the public to use and enjoy these resources, GFP strives to continually improve habitat and access management of public and private lands.

Public lands, and specifically GFP owned and managed lands, are the cornerstone of providing habitat and quality public hunting and fishing access opportunities. However, most land in the state is privately owned, meaning enhancing habitat for wildlife and fish on private land and increasing public access to these populations is a top priority.

Additional staffing and funding have been dedicated to support and enhance habitat and public hunting and fishing access efforts. GFP Private Lands Habitat Biologists (PLHB) serve as primary points of contact for private landowners to assist them with information and implementing both GFP programs and conservation programs not administered by GFP. To provide excellent customer service and meet landowners where they are, GFP hired eight additional PLHBs for a total of twelve statewide. Their focus is on expanding and creating new partnerships with landowners and conservation groups while improving existing aquatic and terrestrial habitat on private and public lands.

With hunters and anglers funding our habitat and access programs, GFP will continue to prioritize habitat program incentives to private landowners who provide reasonable free public hunting and fishing access.



# PRIVATE LANDS HABITAT PROGRAM SUMMARY

## 2021 HABITAT PROGRAM SUMMARY

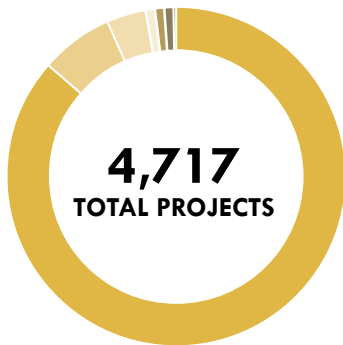


- 1019 | FOOD HABITAT PLOTS
- 72 | GRASSLAND ENHANCEMENT
- 41 | WOODY COVER
- 19 | WILDLIFE FRIENDLY FENCE
- 8 | GRASSLAND RESTORATION
- 6 | HABITAT PROTECTION FENCE
- 3 | WETLAND ENHANCEMENTS

ONE YEAR HABITAT MANAGEMENT	
Food Habitat Plots	11,974 Acres
Woody Cover	92 Acres
Habitat Protection Fence	90 Acres
Grassland Enhancement	36,020 Acres
Grassland Restoration	328 Acres
Wetland Enhancements	7 Acres
Wildlife Friendly Fence	15,310 Acres

**\$2.13 MILLION**  
TOTAL GFP AND LANDOWNER FUNDS

## 4 YEAR HABITAT PROGRAM SUMMARY



- 4,076 | FOOD HABITAT PLOTS
- 327 | GRASSLAND ENHANCEMENT
- 185 | WOODY COVER
- 44 | WILDLIFE FRIENDLY FENCE
- 41 | GRASSLAND RESTORATION
- 34 | HABITAT PROTECTION FENCE
- 10 | WETLAND ENHANCEMENT

FOUR YEAR HABITAT MANAGEMENT	
Food Habitat Plots	47,896 Acres
Woody Cover	532 Acres
Habitat Protection Fence	284 Acres
Grassland Enhancement	132,681 Acres
Grassland Restoration	2,015 Acres
Wetland Enhancements	18 Acres
Wildlife Friendly Fence	51,290 Acres

**\$6.65 MILLION**  
TOTAL GFP AND LANDOWNER FUNDS

## COOPERATIVELY FUNDED POSITIONS

- DUCKS UNLIMITED
- AMERICAN BIRD CONSERVANCY
- BIRD CONSERVANCY OF THE ROCKIES
- PHEASANTS FOREVER | SAGE GROUSE SPECIALIST
- PHEASANTS FOREVER | FARM BILL SPECIALIST
- SOUTH DAKOTA GRASSLAND COALITION
- NAT. WILD TURKEY FED. | BLACK HILLS FORESTER

GFP partners with several conservation organization to support 21 private lands habitat specialists across South Dakota who deliver programs - including farm bill conservation programs and GFP private lands programs - and technical assistance to thousands of private landowners each year, impacting hundreds of thousands of acres. GFP's financial contributions to these positions are matched several times over with federal, state, and local funds that both support the positions and the important conservation work they provide to South Dakota landowners.



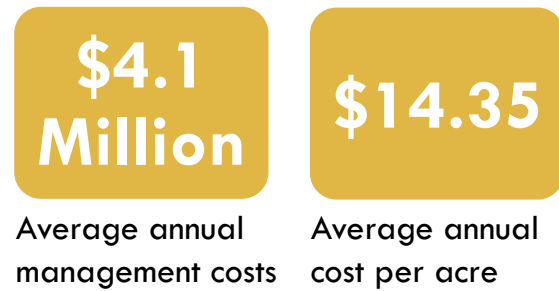


# GAME PRODUCTION AREA MANAGEMENT

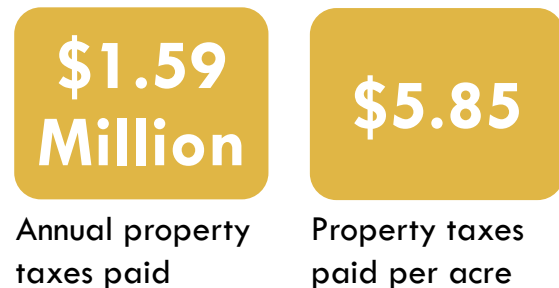


ANNUAL HABITAT MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT	
Food plots planted	3,900 acres/year
Tree and shrub plantings	70 acres/year
Nesting cover seedings	1,600 acres/year
Pollinator plots planted	200 acres/year
Noxious weeds controlled	12,000 acres/year
Roads and trails maintained	320 miles/year
Parking areas and boat ramps maintained	650 sites/year
Boundary posts and signs maintained	900 miles/year

## ANNUAL MANAGEMENT COSTS



## ANNUAL PROPERTY TAXES PAID



# SOUTH DAKOTA SHOOTING SPORTS COMPLEX

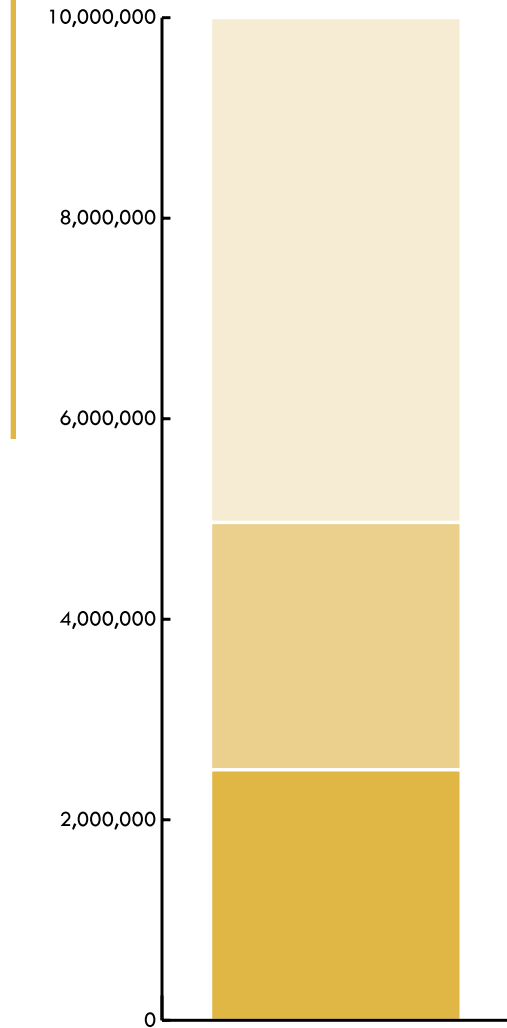
JOHN KANTA | TERRESTRIAL SECTION CHIEF

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) is in the process of planning the finest and largest outdoor shooting range ever constructed in South Dakota. The range will be constructed on 400 acres of property a few miles north of Rapid City. The cost of the property is approximately \$1 million and the estimated cost of construction is \$10 million. An architectural engineer has been hired and work has begun on detailed plans for the range. Stakeholder meetings are being held on a monthly basis to take input and also to assist with fundraising and range development. GFP is actively seeking funding partners for this project. To date, \$2,466,000 has been raised to help fund construction of the range. GFP intends to break ground spring of 2022 and complete construction by fall of 2022.

## PROJECT GOALS

- » To provide a safe, designated place for people to go.
- » To create one complex that provides all amenities. To design a complex that feels convenient, safe, and easy to use - just a few minutes from town.
- » To provide an organized range layout.
- » To build a range that supports the R3 efforts: To recruit, retain, reactivate outdoor enthusiasts.
- » To build a community partnership project.

## MONEY RAISED



**\$2,466,000 out of \$10,000,000 has been raised through private donations. GFP has committed \$2,500,000 to help fund construction of the range.**



# WHY DOES SOUTH DAKOTA GAME, FISH AND PARKS CARE ABOUT SHOOTING SPORTS AND SHOOTING RANGES IN SOUTH DAKOTA?

The SD Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) has a history of promoting safe and accessible shooting sports opportunities for residents and visitors to SD. We have a commitment to providing shooting range opportunities on public lands and a shooting range grant program to assist with maintenance and development of private ranges in exchange for public access to those ranges. Currently GFP operates eighteen shooting ranges across SD.

In the late 1930s, an existing excise tax on firearms and ammunition was redirected to state fish and wildlife agencies for wildlife species restoration. What became known as the Pittman-Robertson (PR) Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration

Act has provided over \$12 billion to states since it was put in place. While the bulk of the funding is used for wildlife management, PR funds have also been used by states to build and maintain shooting ranges. Now, with the Target Practice and Marksmanship Training Support Act signed into law in 2019, states have even more flexibility to use these funds to construct and enhance public shooting ranges. Recreational shooters are a key constituency helping to pay into the PR funding program. GFP recognizes that recreational shooters pay a large portion of excise taxes on their guns and ammunition that put funds into the PR program.

# 55%

Approximately 55% of South Dakota voters own a firearm.

In 2007, PR apportionments were approximately \$267 million and in 2015 increased to \$808 million almost entirely due to non-hunting recreational shooters.

Southwick Associates estimates that there are approximately **159,400 shooting sports participants in South Dakota** that spend an average of **1,336,200 days of shooting annually**. This activity is estimated to support **846 jobs** with salaries and wages totaling **\$27 million** in South Dakota.

Shooting sports in South Dakota generate an estimated...

**\$55**  
**MILLION**  
in retail sales

**\$6**  
**MILLION**  
in federal taxes  
annually

**\$4**  
**MILLION**  
in state and  
local taxes

Support for the second amendment, recreational shooting and acceptance of firearms in the public is a key factor in keeping our hunting heritage alive now and in the future.

South Dakota receives approximately 11.7 million dollars in PR funding, which is used to wildlife management and other conservation efforts.



# THREE-DUCK EXPERIMENTAL REGULATIONS UPDATE

ROCCO MURANO | SENIOR WATERFOWL BIOLOGIST

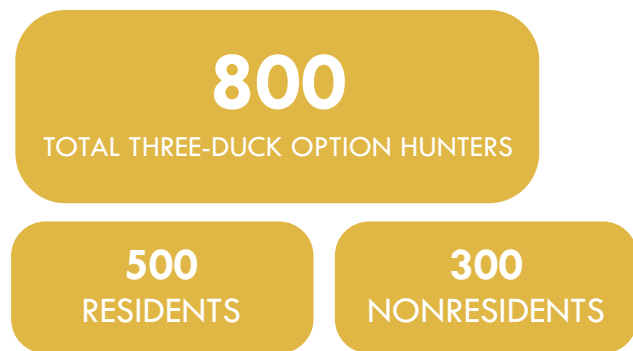
Declines in duck hunters in many states across the Central Flyway are well documented. Crucially, South Dakota has lost approximately 50% of its active resident duck hunters since the late 1990's. Reductions in duck hunter participation provide a challenge for wildlife managers as the North American Model of Wildlife Management relies on hunters to support wetland and grassland conservation. Several recent human dimensions projects have shown duck identification on the wing to be a barrier to potential recruitment, retention, and reactivation of duck's hunters. In an attempt to reverse this trend, experimental regulations have been implemented to evaluate the barrier of identifying waterfowl on the wing.

Beginning in the 2021-2022 duck hunting season South Dakota and Nebraska began a two-tiered system of duck hunting regulations. These regulations will remain for a minimum of four years. In this system, duck hunters register themselves under one of two different regulatory options via the Hunter Information Program (HIP). The traditional option, Tier I, is the traditional duck daily bag that offers maximum hunting opportunity (i.e., current daily bag limits with

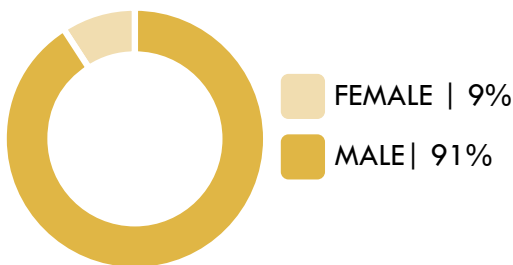
all species-specific daily bag restrictions) while the Three-Duck option, Tier II, is a simplified daily bag (i.e., three duck daily bag limit with no species or sex restrictions).

The three-duck option became available to hunters in South Dakota on July 1, 2021. Hunters who choose the three-duck option are asked to participate in both a harvest diary and parts collection, sending in wings to be used in comparison to hunters using the traditional duck regulation. Post season surveys will be used to track many variables including demographics, satisfaction, churn rate, and avidity of three-duck option participants.

Beginning in the Spring of 2021 a multifaceted outreach effort including podcasts, traditional print media, social media posts, and direct emails began to make individuals aware of this option. Over the next four duck seasons participation trends, harvest information, and hunter opinion of both three-duck and traditional duck hunters will be tracked and compared to surrounding states.

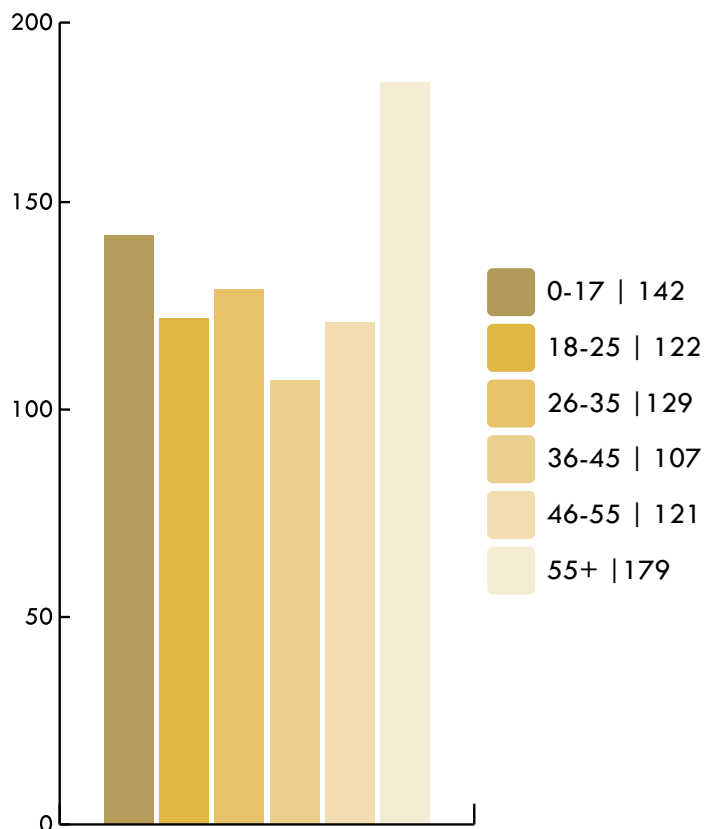


## DEMOGRAPHICS



\* Data compiled in November 2021

## AGE DEMOGRAPHICS



# YOUTH HUNTING CHANGES

SAM SCHELHAAS | LAW ENFORCEMENT SECTION CHIEF

In 2021, additional emphasis was placed on getting more youth hunting and fishing in South Dakota.

In their 2021 legislative session, the South Dakota State Legislature amended the age for youth from less than 16 years old to less than 18 years old for fishing, hunting and trapping with the goal of engaging our younger generation of hunters for a longer duration.

Prior to this change there was confusion amongst our youth anglers and hunters along with their parents as they tried to figure out what license was needed to hunt, fish or both. This bill allowed our Agency to work with the Game, Fish and Parks Commission to streamline our licenses to accommodate our users.

To really understand these changes, one must remember there is a difference between a youth hunter and a mentor hunter and their corresponding licenses. A youth hunting license is designed for youth hunters. Youth hunters are individuals who are 12 to 17 years of age who have taken the HuntSafe Class. Mentor hunting licenses are designed for mentor hunters. Mentor hunters are under the age of 16 and have NOT taken the HuntSafe class but would like to give hunting a try prior to making the commitment to take a HuntSafe class. It should be noted that there are several more requirements for the individual doing the mentoring.

Some of the highlights that have been accomplished are:

- » No fishing license is required for anyone under the age of 18 years old, resident and non-resident alike. This eliminated the need for a junior combination license which was for youth ages 16 and 17 and allowed them to hunt and fish during the valid seasons. This was the only option available for this age group which always caused confusion.
- » The youth small game license now applies to anyone under the age of 18 years old, again, for both residents and non-residents.
- » Mentor small game is now available for both residents and now non-residents. All other criteria for the mentor program must still be met
- » Clearly defined and differentiated the mentor, youth and apprentice big game licenses
  - Mentor deer/antelope/turkey is available for residents and non-residents. Non-residents must have a resident sponsor indicated on the license application
  - Youth deer ages 12 (or will turn 12 by December 31)-17.





# WILDLIFE DAMAGE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

EMMETT KEYSER | REGIONAL SUPERVISOR

Many of our state's citizens may not be aware that South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) operates a multi-faceted Wildlife Damage Management (WDM) Program which is designed to address human-wildlife conflicts involving most species of wildlife that occur throughout South Dakota. Currently, wildlife damage specialists, numerous summer interns and seasonal staff and many other GFP staff provide the "boots-on-the-ground" to help deliver WDM program services to South Dakota ag producers and many other citizens as well. While our WDM program staff most often work directly with South Dakota's livestock and agricultural producers to alleviate or reduce livestock loss from predators (primarily coyote), they also work with these same ag producers as well as many other landowners across the state to help alleviate damage to growing crops, stored feed, fences and hay supplies cause by a variety of wildlife, including beaver, Canada geese, deer, elk, pronghorn antelope, turkeys and other nuisance wildlife. GFP also provides prairie dog control on private lands lying adjacent to public lands to help reduce damage by those animals that encroach onto private property from those public lands.

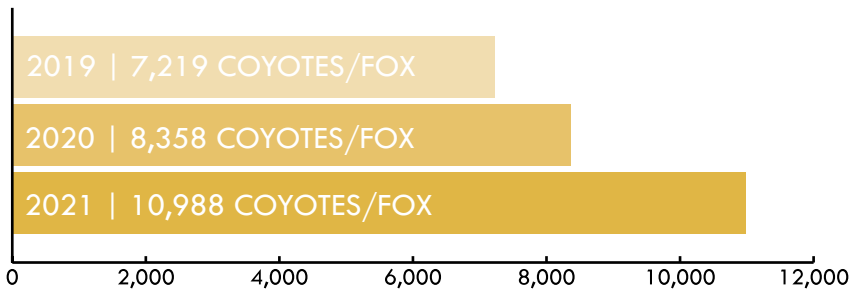
**28**  
WILDLIFE DAMAGE SPECIALISTS

**2,900**  
REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE

**2,000+**  
LANDOWNERS ASSISTED

**3.7 MILLION**  
SPENT ON THE WDM PROGRAM

## NUMBER OF COYOTES/FOX REMOVED



## LAW ENFORCEMENT

SAM SCHELHAAS | LAW ENFORCEMENT SECTION CHIEF

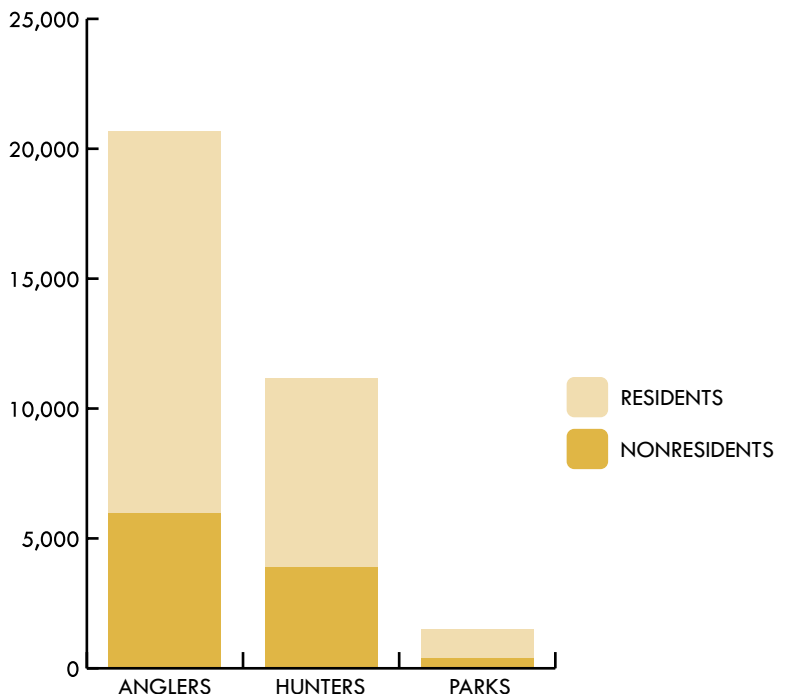
### OPERATION DRY WATER

**2,293**  
BOATERS CHECKED

**83**  
CITATIONS ISSUED

**20**  
BOATING UNDER THE INFLUENCE

### FIELD CONTACT TOTALS



# 2021 BOUNTY PROGRAM

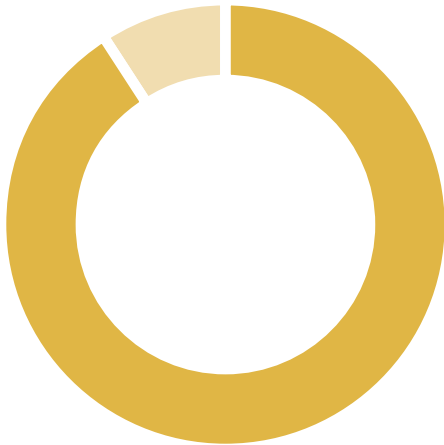
KEITH FISK | PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR

**2,773**  
TOTAL PARTICIPANTS

**25%**  
SUBMISSIONS WITH GFP  
LIVE TRAPS

**13%**  
INCREASE IN YOUTH  
PARTICIPATION

## LOCATION



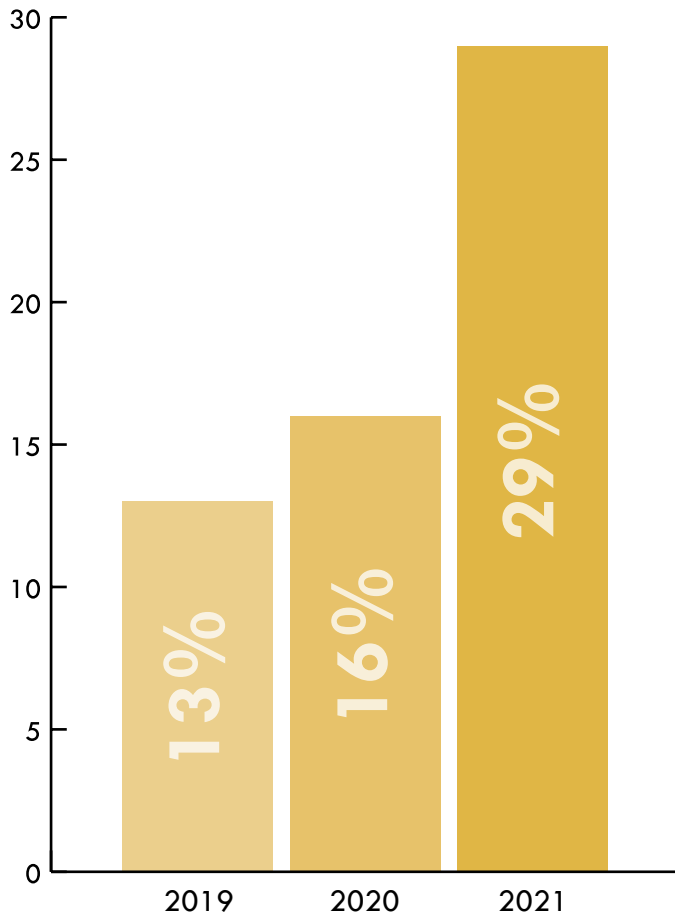
- WEST RIVER | 9%
- EAST RIVER | 91%

**“WE’RE THRILLED WITH THE AMOUNT OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION WE ARE SEEING THIS YEAR. GETTING THE NEXT GENERATION INVOLVED IN CONSERVATION AND THE LONG-STANDING TRADITION OF TRAPPING IS CRITICAL FOR KEEPING OUR SOUTH DAKOTA OUTDOOR HERITAGE STRONG.”**

**KEVIN ROBLING**  
DEPARTMENT SECRETARY

2021 marked the third year of the Nest Predator Bounty Program. The program reduces local nest predator populations as a way to enhance pheasant and duck nest success and encourages youth and families to get outside and ensure trapping remains a part of South Dakota’s long-standing outdoor heritage. GFP put an additional emphasis on youth participation in 2021. Each week, a drawing was held for youth participating in the program. Winners of the drawing received three live traps, a trapping booklet, and a knife. In 2021, 29% of the program participants were under the age of 18, up from 16% in 2020.

## 2019-2021 YOUTH PARTICIPATION



# PHEASANT HUNTING MARKETING UPDATE

NICK HARRINGTON | COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

THE MAIN FOCUS FOR THE SECOND YEAR OF OUR PHEASANT HUNTING MARKETING CAMPAIGN WAS TO TARGET AND RECRUIT WOMEN.

**53.46%**

OF WOMEN LICENSE PURCHASERS ARE FROM SOUTH DAKOTA. FOLLOWED BY MINNESOTA WITH 9.44% AND NEBRASKA WITH 5.44%.

**10%**

OVERALL INCREASE COMPARED TO THREE YEAR-AVERAGE

## 2020 VS 2021 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

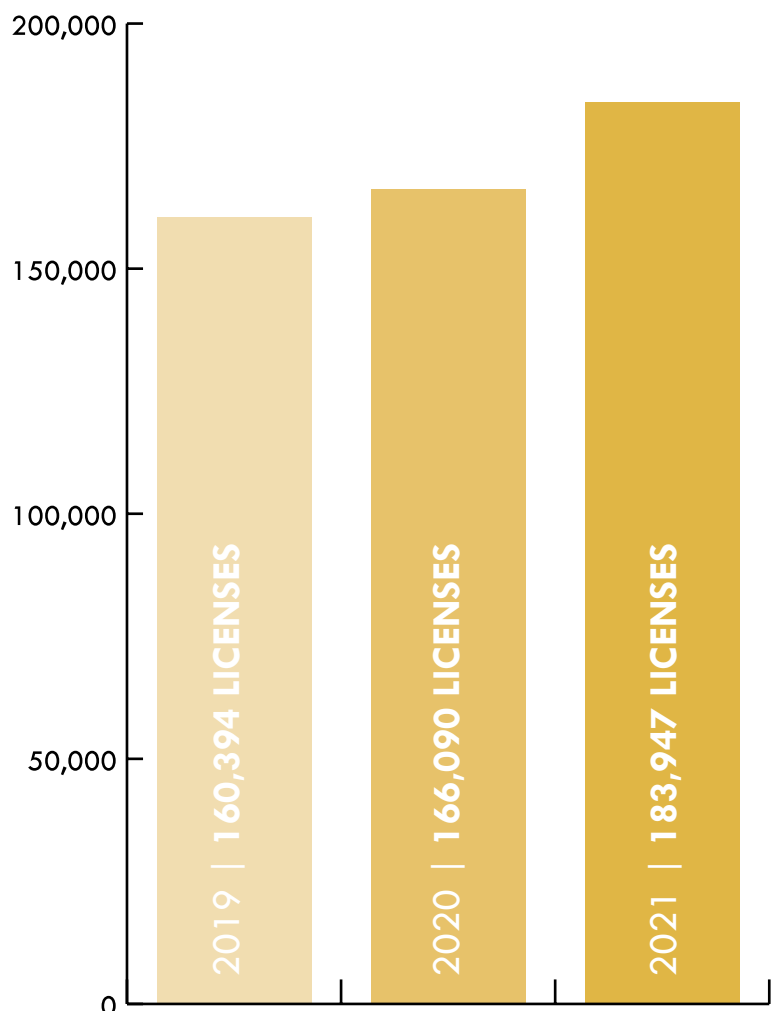
**10% INCREASE**  
WEBSITE USERS

**9% INCREASE**  
WEBSITE SESSIONS

**10% INCREASE**  
SOCIAL FOLLOWERS

**2,533**  
NEW EMAIL SUBSCRIBERS

## SMALL GAME LICENSE SALES



# CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE UPDATE

CHAD SWITZER | WILDLIFE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR

The goal of the Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Action Plan is to determine the presence of CWD, reduce the spread of CWD, and to have an informed public to ensure viable deer and elk populations for future generations.

In 2021, the GFP Commission revised regulations for the transportation and disposal of deer and elk carcasses; the following regulations are in place for the 2021 deer and elk hunting seasons:

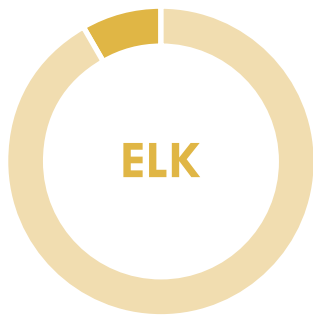
- » If any portion of the carcass is transported from the county of harvest, the revised regulations will require the hunter to dispose of all carcass remains with a waste management provider, if an allowable trash item, or with a permitted landfill.
- » Game processors and taxidermists, regardless of the location of harvest, are required to dispose of all carcass remains with a waste management provider, if

- an allowable trash item, or with a permitted landfill.
- » Carcasses from another state brought back into South Dakota must be disposed of with a waste management provider or landfill that accepts carcass parts.
- » Carcasses passing through the state are exempt from any regulations.

GFP communication staff used several methods to enhance public outreach to further increase the awareness of CWD, management implications, best management practices, and regulations now applicable to hunters, game processors and taxidermists.

Current information on CWD, new regulations, best management practices and how to submit samples for testing can be found at [gfp.sd.gov/chronic-wasting-disease/](https://gfp.sd.gov/chronic-wasting-disease/).

Results from the CWD surveillance efforts during the 2020 deer and elk hunting seasons include the following samples and positive detections by species:



- CWD NEGATIVE ELK | 91
- CWD POSITIVE ELK | 8



- CWD NEGATIVE MULE DEER | 304
- CWD POSITIVE MULE DEER | 7



- CWD NEGATIVE WHITETAIL DEER | 1,270
- CWD POSITIVE WHITETAIL DEER | 34

## CWD POSITIVE COUNTIES



CWD has now been detected in free-ranging deer and elk in 19 South Dakota counties including including Lyman, Mellette, Sully (first detection east of the Missouri River), Ziebach, Stanley and Buffalo.



# RAISING MONEY FOR HABITAT

TOTAL RAFFLE PROCEEDS: \$500,000



In March 2021, Second Century Habitat Fund announced a new way for individuals to support habitat and have the chance to win the ultimate hunting vehicle. GFP partnered with the Second Century Habitat Fund, South Dakota Department of Tourism, Can-Am, and R+R Pheasant Hunting to raffle off a Can-Am Defender Max Limited with all

proceeds supporting the Second Century Habitat Fund and will help fund the Second Century Working Lands Program, Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and woody habitat development across the state.

**The mission of the Second Century Habitat Fund Board is to be advocates of habitat stewardship, collaborate with community partners, and be conservation leaders to benefit all of South Dakota.**

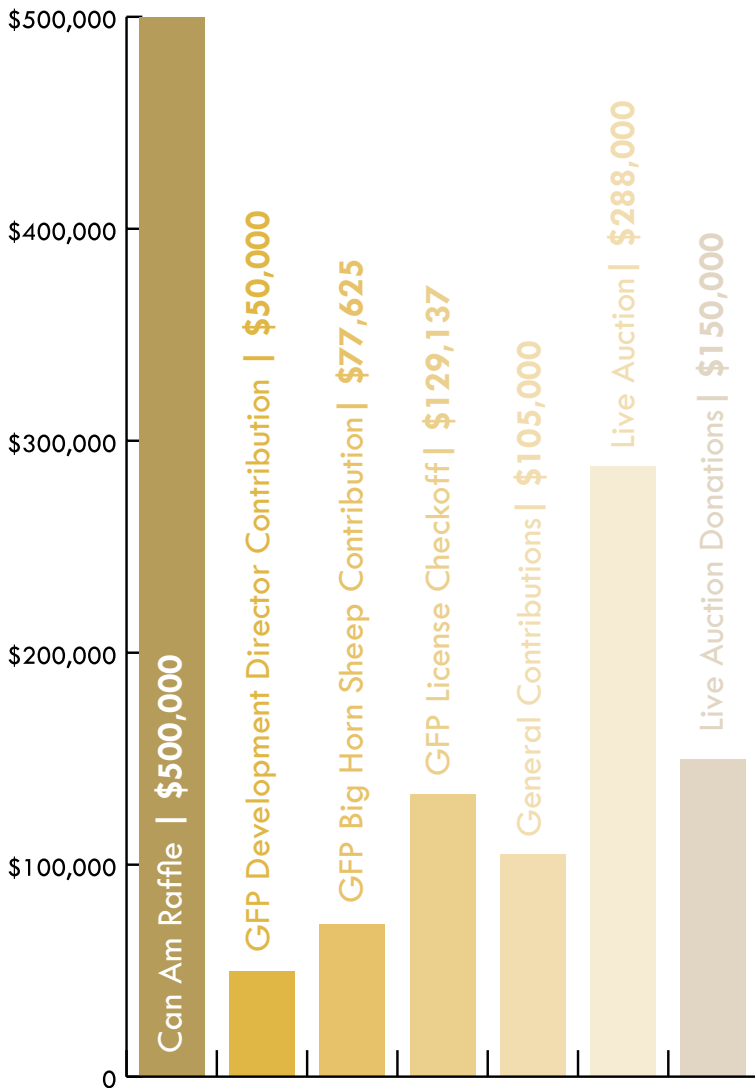


## SECOND CENTURY HABITAT FUND

SEAN BLANCHETTE | STAFF SPECIALIST

The Second Century Habitat Fund has the vision to restore and retain pheasant habitat development while providing awareness to the importance of sustaining South Dakota's strong outdoor heritage of pheasant hunting for future generations. Their goal is putting seed in the ground and assisting landowners with planting marginal acres to grasslands for wildlife habitat. In 2021, the Working Lands Habitat program was able to assist private landowners with seeding over 6,500 acres to perennial grass.

**Over the last year, the Second Century Habitat Fund has been working to raise money to support this vision.**



**DONATE AT SDHABITATFUND.ORG**

## PARKS AND WILDLIFE FOUNDATION

SEAN BLANCHETTE | STAFF SPECIALIST

The South Dakota Parks & Wildlife Foundation is a nonprofit 501(c)3 corporation. That enhances and increases outdoor recreational opportunities in South Dakota. In partnering with GFP, the Foundation brings private funding to major public projects for all to enjoy.

### THE PROJECTS YOUR GIFTS SUPPORT INCLUDE:

- » Custer State Park Bison Center
- » Palisades State Park Expansion
- » Good Earth State Park
- » Peter Norbeck Outdoor Education Center
- » Custer State Park Visitors Center Improvements
- » Outdoor Campus in Rapid City Enhancement
- » Outdoor Campus Sioux Falls Enhancement



# HUNT FOR HABITAT

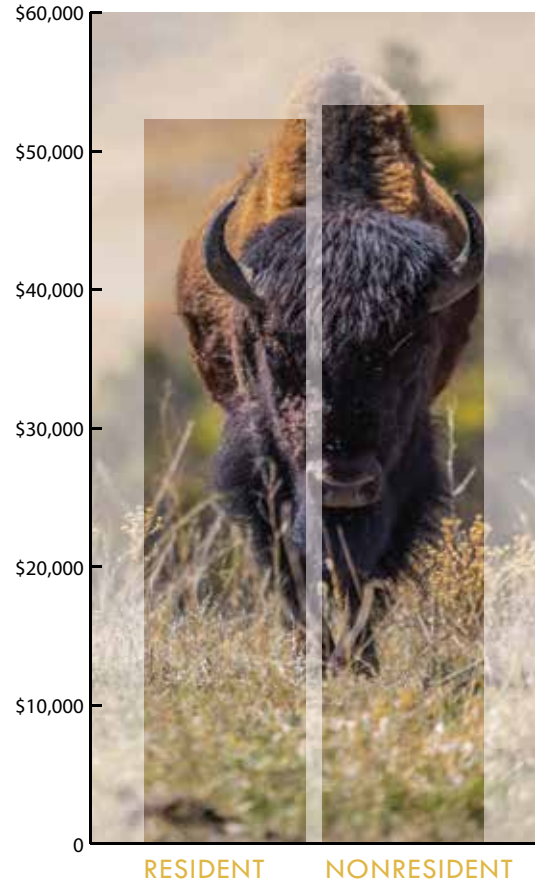
2021 TOTAL TICKET SALES | \$329,920

PACKAGE ONE | \$224,380

PACKAGE TWO | \$105,540



Package One offered hunters the opportunity for any elk, any deer and any antelope tag. There were three total packages available. Nonresidents were eligible to win up to one of these packages.



Package Two offered hunters the opportunity for a Custer State Park Trophy Buffalo license. There was one tag available that was eligible to be won by either a resident or nonresident.

## WHERE THE MONEY GOES

In 2021, the Hunt for Habitat raffle raised a total of \$329,920. This money is being paired with Habitat Stamp funds to complete habitat developments on over 60 Game Production Areas (GPA) across South Dakota. Projects include 760 acres of high diversity native grass plantings, 33 acres of pollinator habitat, 118 acres of tree and shrub plantings, and management practices to improve grassland habitats on over 2,000 acres.



THE HUNT FOR HABITAT HAS RAISED OVER 1 MILLION DOLLARS FOR HABITAT SINCE 2019!



# HABITAT STAMP

JASON **JUNGWIRTH** | SENIOR BIOLOGIST – AQUATIC HABITAT AND ACCESS

PAUL **COUGHLIN** | TERRESTRIAL HABITAT PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR

**\$2,679,921**

TOTAL MONEY SPENT

**168**

HABITAT STAMP PROJECTS

## TYPES OF PROJECTS

### WOODY COVER DEVELOPMENT

Woody habitat plantings are designed to provide ground and mid-level wildlife food and cover throughout all of the South Dakota seasons. These accomplishments are meant to also increase wildlife populations through survival enhancement and protection from predators.

In 2021, GFP habitat managers utilized \$160,000 in Habitat Stamp funds to plant 68 acres of trees and shrubs on 14 different GPAs across the state.

### HIGH DIVERSITY NATIVE

#### GRASS SEEDING

Native grass seeding provides a high quality cover and nesting material for many species throughout South Dakota. When undisturbed, this resource can be heavily utilized by all game species and return the landscape to a more diverse and native stands free of common invasive, lower quality forage.

### DAM REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE

Habitat Stamp funds are being used to enhance repairs, upgrades, and rehabilitation to impoundment structures throughout the state. By completing these projects, GFP continues to benefit these fisheries and create additional opportunities for anglers across the state.

### FOOD PLOTS

Although food is normally available to wildlife in the form of waste grain and weed seeds, there are times when a well-placed food plot is an important wildlife management tool. Food is an important attractant for wildlife. Wildlife will often readily move to good food sources.

In order for a food plot to be effective, it must be strategically placed near dense winter cover such as cattail sloughs, woody habitat plantings and warm season native grass plantings.

Annual weeds in a second year food plot often provide an additional food and cover source. Second year food plots often have plenty of grain.

### IMPROVED ACCESS AND TRAILS

GFP continues to use Habitat Stamp funds to improve or replace water access assets throughout the state. These resources are sometimes the closest areas of recreation in rural areas of the state, and improvements are immediately utilized by our stakeholders. Some projects that have been accomplished include public access trails and boat ramp developments.

**\$1,665,520**

FINAL COST OF  
TERRESTRIAL HABITAT  
STAMP PROJECTS

**\$1,014,401**

FINAL COST OF  
AQUATIC HABITAT  
STAMP PROJECTS

## OTHER PROJECTS

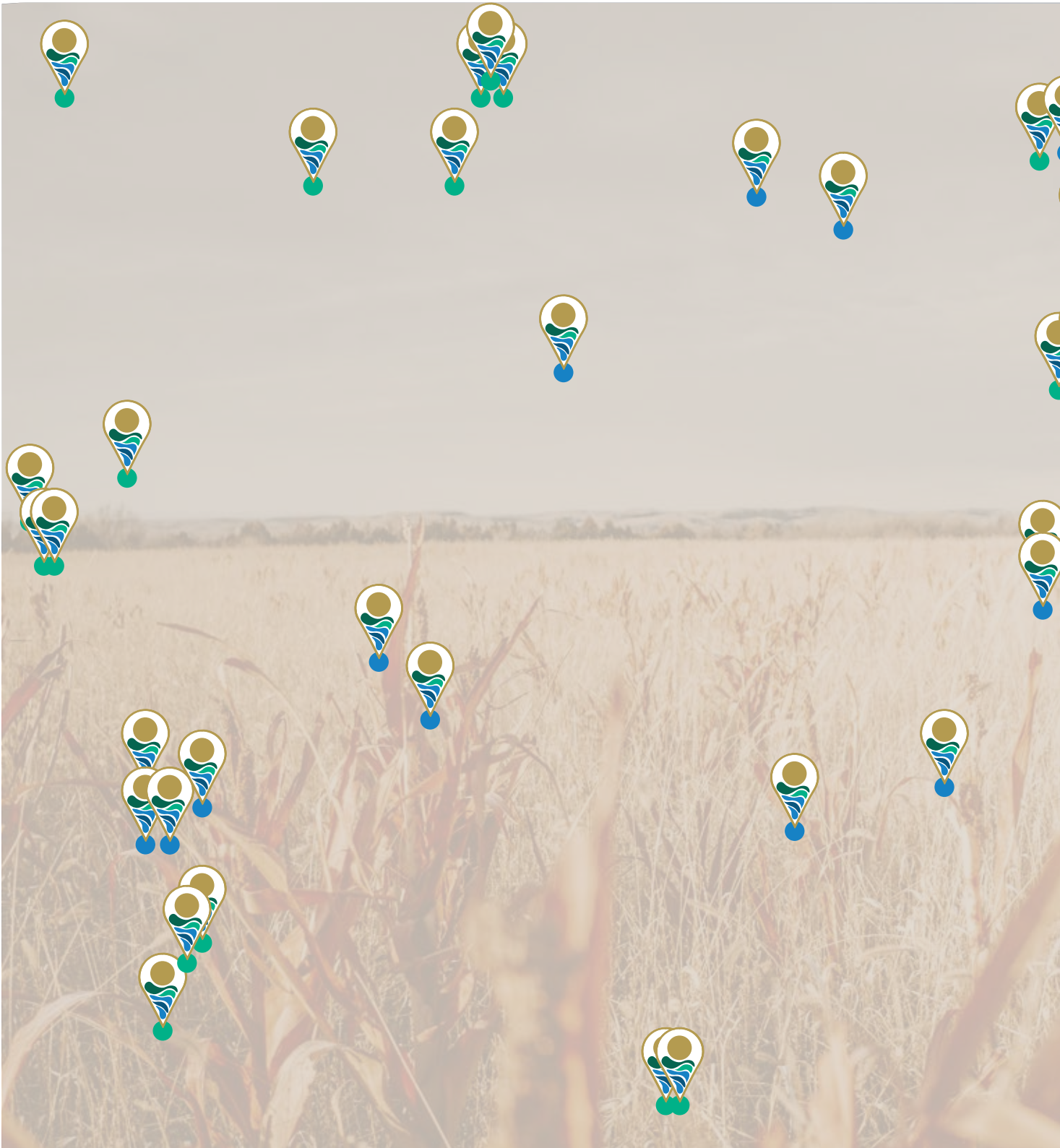
Habitat Stamp funds are also used to enhance habitat on public lands, develop boat ramps, do native shoreline plantings and plant pollinator plots.



## BACKGROUND

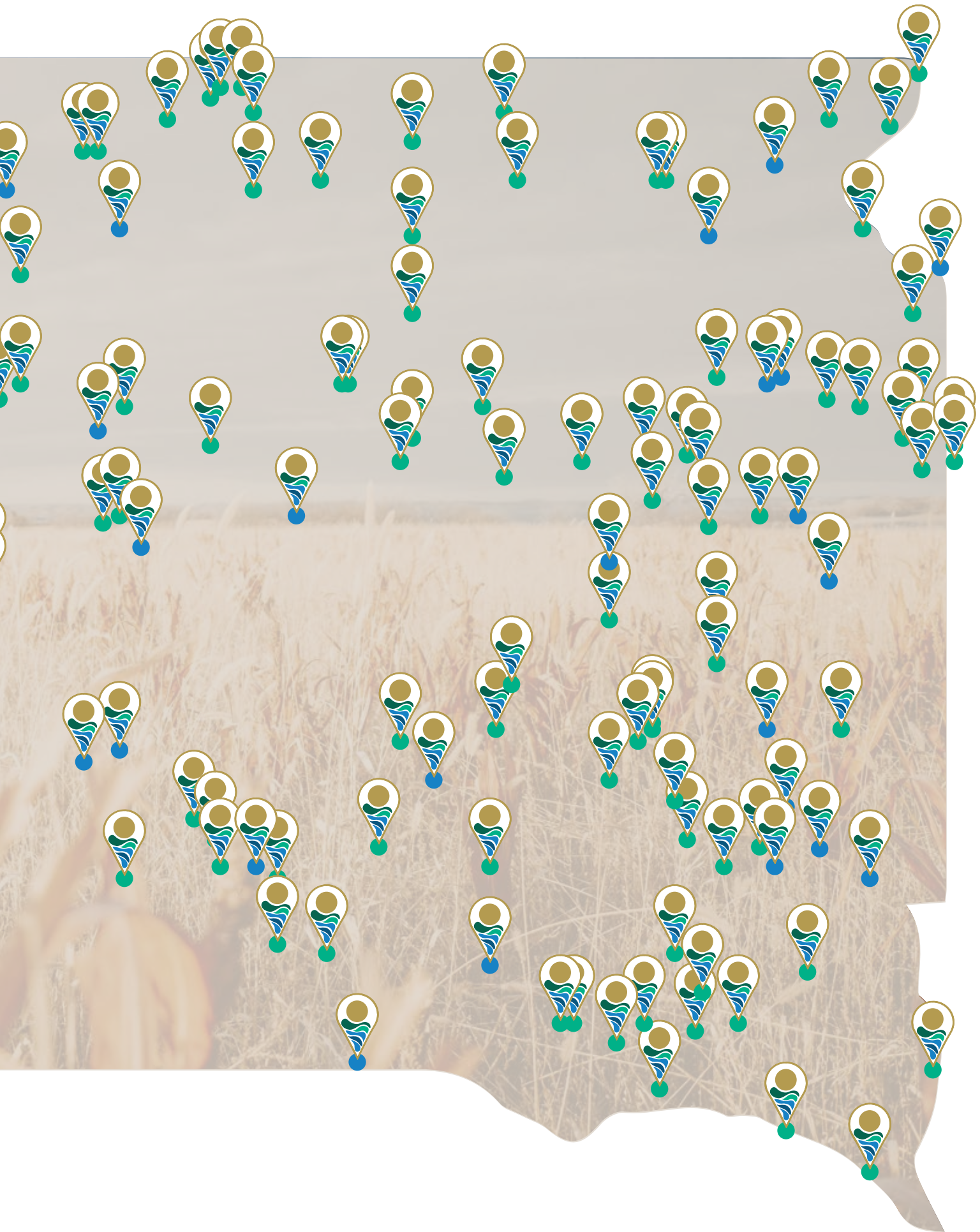
In the 2020 legislative session, the South Dakota legislature passed the Habitat Stamp. Effective July 1, 2020, the stamp is a requirement for any individual over 18 years of age purchasing a hunting, fishing or trapping license. This money goes directly back into improving habitat on public lands or providing public access to private land.



# HABITAT STAMP PROJECT LOCATIONS



-  TERRESTRIAL
-  AQUATIC





# HABITAT STAMP BEFORE AND AFTER

## DRYWOOD LAKE ACCESS TRAIL IMPROVEMENT



## FORSCH LAKE GPA



## STICKNEY DAM REPAIR



# WILDLIFE DIVERSITY

## WILDLIFE DIVERSITY TEAM

GFP's Wildlife Diversity Program is responsible for a variety of resources and activities to help GFP deliver products and information that address the needs of the full spectrum of the state's fish and wildlife and related habitats. Summarized below are examples of work conducted or overseen during 2021 by staff or contractors.

### INFORMATION:

South Dakotans love the outdoors and enjoy learning about the wild animals that depend on those same outdoors.

- » A USD-trained herpetologist, Drew Davis, updated the "Field Guide to Amphibians and Reptiles of South Dakota." This second edition is available for purchase through GFP's website.
- » The "Field Guide to Butterflies of South Dakota" has been updated by the book's author, Gary Marrone. Wildlife Diversity staff are completing the book's second edition, which is anticipated to be available for sale in 2022.
- » A detailed book about South Dakota's fishes has not been completed since Bailey and Allum's 1962 "Fishes of South Dakota." A new version of this resource is in technical review with an anticipated summer 2022 release date. Like the earlier book, the new resource will include detailed species profiles, distribution maps and a dichotomous key for South Dakota fish identification.

### MONITORING:

Only by monitoring can we detect population changes or local habitat issues and begin to remedy them.

- » Surveys for the regal fritillary butterfly were conducted in central South Dakota during the summer of 2021. Due to drought, nectaring resources were scarce in uplands, which relegated occurrences to riparian zones, an important early finding. A second season of surveys is scheduled for the summer of 2022.

### RECOVERING AMERICA'S WILDLIFE ACT (RAWA):

GFP continues to advocate for this bipartisan bill, which has been introduced in both the U.S. House and U.S. Senate. RAWA would annually redirect more than \$1 billion in unobligated environmental fines to state and tribal fish and wildlife agencies to help meet the needs of all species and habitats. An estimated \$16 million per year would be allocated to GFP to help the agency implement the South Dakota Wildlife Action Plan, a proactive approach to conservation, which will be revised soon to include environmental education and wildlife-associated recreation. Tribal funds could be used for action plan preparation or for implementing the variety of conservation needs known on tribal lands.

- » Surveys for nesting Peregrine Falcons, a state endangered species, have been conducted in the Black Hills of South Dakota since 2017. Since then, five active nests have been documented with varying nest success. In 2021, four nests were active and all were successful, producing at least 12 young.
- » Bird surveys were conducted on Game Production Areas (GPA) in seven western South Dakota counties in 2019 and 2020 to document all breeding species and monitor responses to the land management practices of grazing and timber thinning. The 23 GPAs surveyed had 118 bird species. Four of 14 grassland species responded positively to prescribed grazing, while responses to ponderosa pine thinning varied by species. This was the first inventory of breeding bird species on many GPAs in western South Dakota.



*Eastern tiger swallowtail, photo by Doug Backlund.*



# PROPOSED OUTDOOR CAMPUS SIOUX FALLS EXPANSION

DAVID PARKER | DIRECTOR OF THE OUTDOOR CAMPUS – SIOUX FALLS

The Outdoor Campus Sioux Falls is one of two South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Wildlife Division education centers located in the state. The Outdoor Campus in Sioux Falls opened its doors in 1997 and has gone through several changes over the year and in July of 2020 another improvement was identified: the addition of an indoor shooting range and the expansion of the outdoor range to help in the states continued efforts in recruitment, retention, and reactivation (R3) of hunters and anglers.

In May of 2021, the Parks and Wildlife Foundation agreed to fund raise \$500,000 of the expected need for this expansion. The remaining funds for the project will come from Dingle-Johnson Federal Funds, Pittman-Robertson Federal Funds, and Modernizing the Pittman-Robertson Act for Tomorrow's Needs (funds specifically for shooting ranges).

In conjunction with the Parks and Wildlife Foundation efforts, a Campus advisory board was created, The Friends of The Outdoor Campus Sioux Falls, to help with this project and future projects. This board comprises local community members and stakeholders with an interest in the Campus and has the immediate goals of raising awareness for the project, connecting with other local partners on the project, and helping to raise funds for the project.

The scope of this expansion includes: an indoor archery and bb gun range, a game processing space, the addition of another classroom, a family bathroom, a nursing mothers' room, an updated wildlife viewing area, and the creation of an outdoor range that could allow for hunting style compound bows.

With an expected end date of September 2024, this project will provide a space for year-round archery and bb gun classes, game processing education, indoor fly rod casting, and more space for organizations to meet.

100,000

APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF VISITORS  
PER YEAR

19,430

CLASS PARTICIPANTS  
PER YEAR





# GO OUTDOORS SOUTH DAKOTA

HEATHER VILLA | WILDLIFE ADMINISTRATION SECTION CHIEF

In December of 2021, South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks launched Go Outdoors South Dakota, a one stop shop e-commerce solution for hunting/fishing licenses and camping reservations and parks entrance licenses. The new system provides our customers with a seamless experience between Parks and Wildlife where they can purchase licenses and make reservations in one simple transaction. We have built in family features, such as being able to link accounts for ease of use when purchasing licenses for your entire family! Go Outdoors South Dakota also has a durable hard card available for you to keep your licenses in your wallet on a commemorative card.

Go Outdoors South Dakota has enhanced camping features such as being able to view campsites with a 360 degree view before you book, signing up for notifications for specific campgrounds, and adding

campgrounds to a favorites list so your most frequent locations are easier to access when you are booking. We offer merchandise as well as the ability to donate to the Parks and Wildlife Foundation as well as the Second Century Habitat Fund.

Our focus is customer service, and Go Outdoors South Dakota will make it easier for our customers to get outside and continue to participate in timeless traditions while spending time with their outdoor families.

## Main Features of the New System

- » Provides a one-stop shop for our customers
- » Combines purchase of hunting and fishing licenses with our state park camping reservations and other purchases
- » Offers 360 view of state parks for camping reservations



**SOUTH DAKOTA GAME, FISH AND PARKS  
2021-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN PRIORITIES**

Who do we strive to be?

# VISION

We will conserve our state's outdoor heritage to enhance the quality of life for current and future generations.

What do we do?

# MISSION

We provide memorable outdoor experiences through effective management of our state's parks, fisheries and wildlife resources.

**HABITAT AND ACCESS · ASSET MANAGEMENT · CUSTOMER SERVICE · OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE**





# HOW DO WE GET THERE?

## GOALS

### OPPORTUNITIES

Provide outdoor recreational opportunities.

Optimize the quantity and quality of sustainable hunting, fishing, camping, trapping and other outdoor recreational opportunities.

### RESOURCES

Serve as stewards of our state's outdoor resources.

Maintain and improve our outdoor resources to ensure sustainability.

### CONFIDENCE

Inspire confidence.

Instill trust from the people we serve through transparency and accountability.

### EXCELLENCE

Foster professional excellence.

Develop and empower highly engaged and well-trained staff.

## PRIORITIES

### HABITAT AND ACCESS

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

### ASSET MANAGEMENT

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

### CUSTOMER SERVICE

We will deliver excellent customer service and meet our customers where they are through an omnichannel approach that incorporates innovative technology and meaningful experiences to everyone who enjoys the outdoors.

### OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

We will focus on growing employee engagement through enhanced internal communications, increased skills training, effective recruitment and onboarding tactics to maximize Team GFP's productivity.

WE SERVE AND CONNECT PEOPLE AND FAMILIES TO THE  
OUTDOORS THROUGH EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF OUR STATE'S  
PARKS, FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES.



**GFP.SD.GOV**



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