

WILDLIFE DAMAGE MANAGEMENT

2022 ANNUAL REPORT



SOUTH DAKOTA GAME, FISH AND PARKS

INTRODUCTION



Greetings! Over the past year, Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Wildlife Damage Specialists from across the state have once again worked hard to help resolve wildlife damage issues for landowners, agricultural producers, and other citizens. We know that each year, situations arise where wildlife cause damage to growing crops, livestock, hay and feed, and other private property. As the agency responsible for managing the fish, wildlife, and furbearer resources in South Dakota, GFP utilizes a science-based approach in our resource management efforts. However, we rely heavily on our daily interactions with landowners, agricultural producers, and outdoor users to further guide our resource management efforts.

Since 1974, GFP has a proven history of cooperatively working with agricultural producers and landowners to resolve wildlife damage concerns by providing a wide variety of wildlife damage management program services. This past year alone, our wildlife damage specialists, conservation officers, and other staff responded to nearly 3,000 individual requests for service regarding problems caused by wildlife.

Private lands in South Dakota account for more than 80 percent of the total land area in our state. Therefore, it is imperative for our agency to serve as a valued partner to landowners and agricultural producers. These individuals not only provide the critical habitats that wildlife need to live and prosper on private lands, but they also provide outdoor recreational access for the state's hunters, anglers, trappers, and others.

From July 2021 through June 2022, staff efforts to limit the damage caused by coyotes, prairie dogs, red foxes, Canada geese, deer, elk, turkeys, antelope, and a variety of other wildlife resulted in a significant workload and required substantial expenditures of funds dedicated to this program. In total, GFP spent over \$3.8 million to operate our Wildlife Damage Programs, including more than \$2 million in expenditures for predatory animal control and another \$1.8 million in expenditures by providing services focused on game animal depredation.

We value the cooperative partnerships that are so critical to the success of our wildlife damage management efforts. This program would not be nearly as successful without the assistance and cooperation of landowners, producers, predator control districts, and other state and federal agencies who serve as our partners. We are incredibly thankful for the funding support provided by USDA APHIS Wildlife Services and the South Dakota Department of Ag and Natural Resources each year. Finally, our Wildlife Damage Management Program could not be as successful without the continued financial assistance and support provided by our state's sportsmen and women through their purchase of hunting and fishing licenses.

Please take the time to review this Annual Wildlife Damage Management Program Report. I believe it will provide you with a better understanding of the importance of these Wildlife Damage Management Program services, highlighting the value of the cooperative partnerships that will help sustain the program and its services well into the future.

Sincerely,

Kevin Robling
Department Secretary

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The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks serves and connects people and families to the outdoors through effective management of our state's parks, fisheries, and wildlife resources.

NEW IN 2022

- » Due to retirements or career changes, several new Wildlife Damage Specialists were hired to fill vacancies. We welcomed Tyler Hofferth to Butte County, Tom Payne to Charles Mix County, Joe Kierl to the Murdo area, and Quinn Hanisch transferred from Belle Fourche to Mitchell.
- » GFP continued to work on accomplishing several strategies from the Wildlife Damage Management (WDM) program strategic plan, in particular a Customer Service Survey was implemented.
- » GFP continued to improve the online “Canada Goose Depredation Hub” that allows landowners to apply for a Canada goose kill subpermit while also developing and implementing a faster and more efficient way for landowners to request assistance with Canada goose damage. In the past, landowners/producers experiencing depredation to growing crops requested service by calling or dropping off field maps with sticky notes. Starting in the spring 2022, producers are now able to use this online site to request services like temporary electric fence or loaner propane cannons.
- » Improvements were made to the Canada Goose Abatement Buffer Strip Program. Signing incentive payments were increased as well as the number of eligible USDA programs. This program is designed to be a longer-term solution (10-15 year) to reduce chronic goose damage to crops.

WILDLIFE DAMAGE SPECIALIST OF THE YEAR: COLTON TAYLOR



(L-R) Wildlife Damage Specialist Colton Taylor, Regional Program Manager Nick Rossman, and Regional Terrestrial Resources Supervisor Dan Sternhagen.

Another successful year for the Wildlife Damage Management (WDM) program has come to an end with a great group of staff once again providing top notch services to private landowners across South Dakota. Each year coworkers and peers across the Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) have an opportunity to nominate a Wildlife Damage Specialist (WDS) for a Specialist of the Year award for the previous year's accomplishments. The 2021 recipient was Colton Taylor.

Colton began his full-time employment with the GFP in Bison, SD in August of 2017 as a Wildlife Damage Specialist. He worked in northwestern SD until June of 2019 when he took advantage of an opportunity to transfer closer to home. In his current duty station in Redfield, SD, he is responsible for Faulk, Spink, and Clark counties.

Colton's dedication and passion for the landowners, sportsmen and women, and the resources of South Dakota are great assets to our WDM team but even more importantly, to the constituents he works with. Colton exhibits a positive "teamwork" attitude and is also a great example of a leader. His openness

and communication style sets him apart and is part of what makes him so successful not just with the landowners he works with, but also with other GFP staff. The different working relationships he's built within his district and beyond shows that he's there to get his job done and make sure it's done with every possible resource.

In just over 3.5 years as a WDS, Colton has already accomplished so much in his district. From extending GFP programs and services to new cooperators in his district, to helping educate the youth in his area about trapping. Colton has become known for his talents and skillsets amongst both his peers as well as the cooperators he's working for.

Colton's dog Briggs is a five-year-old female Mountain Cur that can often be seen with him in the field (see cover photo). Briggs is an excellent coworker for Colton, as she is amazing at recognizing coyote sign, locating dens, and decoying coyotes into rifle range during the spring months.

Colton is a great member of the WDM team!

TIMELINE OF PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND FUNDING



1939

Animal Damage Control (ADC) mandated by state law in cooperation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to control predators, beaver, prairie dogs, and nuisance animals.

1974

South Dakota Legislature transferred the ADC program from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to GFP. GFP must match county-General Fund dollars on a 1:1 basis using department funds. Due to impending ADC program budget shortfalls, the GFP match was eventually increased to a 2:1 rate where hunters now provide two dollars for every one dollar in county General Funds directed into the ADC fund.

1999

Five-dollar surcharge added to most hunting licenses sold in South Dakota to provide more funding to deliver landowner game animal depredation assistance programs caused by game birds and animals. One-half of the money provides private land hunter access programs, with payments going to South Dakota farmers and ranchers who allow hunting access to their properties. The other half supports programs and services to reduce damage caused by game animals as part of a broader “Wildlife Damage Management (WDM) Program.”

2001

As a condition to receive assistance with game animal damage, landowners/producers must agree to allow reasonable free hunting access to people who obtain proper permission (for the species they are requesting assistance with).

2003

“Special Buck” license revenues help support WDM program services.

2009

ADC and WDM programs were formally consolidated into the comprehensive WDM program that GFP operates today.

GFP entered into a cooperative agreement with USDA-Wildlife Services (USDA-WS) for their assistance with aerial predator control in South Dakota.

2013

An additional one-dollar surcharge to most hunting licenses is added due to program budget shortages. GFP added three new field staff positions.

2016

A second aircraft was added for aerial predator control.

2017

Transaction fee from the sale of hunting licenses purchased online increased to help support both WDM and ADC program services.

2019

South Dakota Office of the Governor initiated an external review of GFP’s WDM and ADC programs which resulted in hiring additional staff, increasing aerial predator control, new equipment, a shift of focus to prioritize on-going problems, opportunities for producer input, and a WDM strategic plan.

2020

Two new field staff positions were created in western South Dakota.

SINCE 2000

GFP has spent close to \$30 million on resolving game species depredation (primarily deer, elk, and Canada geese) on private land and over \$30 million on ADC program services.

ADDITIONAL FUNDING PARTNERS FOR SOUTH DAKOTA WDM PROGRAM

South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (DANR)

USDA APHIS Wildlife Services (USDA-WS)

WILDLIFE DAMAGE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM SERVICE GOALS

When someone thinks of a Wildlife Damage Specialist (WDS), several thoughts may come to mind — a GFP staff member assisting with trapping a coyote that has killed livestock; assisting with the construction of electric fence to protect growing crops from Canada goose damage; or assistance regarding deer damage to stored-feed supplies. These answers are all correct. Wildlife damage specialists play an important role within GFP and provide the people of South Dakota with many valuable services.

PRIMARY PURPOSE

With more than 80 percent of South Dakota in private ownership, private landowners play a pivotal role in wildlife management and in providing hunter and angler access across the state. Wildlife damage specialists cooperatively work with landowners and producers to alleviate or reduce all types of wildlife damage to private property. This includes, but is not limited to:

- » Alleviating livestock loss caused by coyotes and fox;
- » Reducing damage to stored-feed supplies from deer, elk, and turkeys;
- » Reducing damage to growing crops from Canada geese and elk;
- » Alleviating livestock loss
- » Reducing damage to commercial melon growers from raccoons and deer;
- » Controlling prairie dogs on lands adjacent to public land; and
- » Reducing damage to crops, dams, trees, roads and other property from beaver.

Wildlife damage specialists assist landowners with a diversity of other human-wildlife conflicts such as pronghorn antelope and pheasant depredation as well as hawk and owl control to protect poultry flocks.

There are also certain situations where wildlife damage staff assists with public safety such as the protection of levees and dikes from wildlife-caused damage, wildlife threats on or near airports, human-wildlife conflicts with aggressive

“We had two lambs killed in our feed lot about a hundred yards from my house one night, and then three the next night. Daren came out, found where they came in, set snares, and ended up catching three coyotes in three nights. Daren kept me informed and showed me what I could do to better protect my livestock and prevent future losses. He provides an invaluable service to the public.”

*- Cody Sturzenbecher
Turner County producer*

wildlife species, and other situations that arise. Some staff members also train and supervise a many seasonal employees and interns which provide the primary workforce for many WDM activities.

Wildlife damage specialists interact with thousands of landowners and producers each year. GFP relies on these staff members to foster relationships and facilitate communications with the citizens of South Dakota they serve at the grass-roots level.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Wildlife damage specialists assist with many different wildlife surveys and disease monitoring efforts that GFP conducts throughout the year while promoting WDM efforts. They assist with surveys such as deer classification and aerial surveys, fawn captures, pronghorn antelope surveys, elk surveys, grouse surveys, and turkey counts. They help with duck and goose banding, bobcat tagging, and walleye spawning when time allows.

They are also called upon to work with other GFP staff on disease monitoring efforts such as Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD), Avian Influenza, and Bovine Tuberculosis (TB) sampling in wildlife. They assist with wildlife research projects when projects demand certain skills or personnel, and play a vital role in the success of many projects. Wildlife damage specialists

also provide input on recommendations for the many different seasons and licenses that South Dakota administers.

PUBLIC OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

Another important role that wildlife damage specialists play is to provide educational seminars and demonstrations to sportsmen groups, schools, and other interested groups to promote the sport hunting and trapping of furbearers. Wildlife damage staff participates in events throughout South Dakota such as the Step-Outside program, ETHICS SD (Ecology, Trapping, History, Identification, Conservation, and Stewardship), and other GFP-sponsored public outreach events.

Wildlife damage specialists present information regarding the WDM program to county commissions, predator control districts, and

“The beaver trapping program the GFP provides to save cropland and roads from thousands of dollars’ worth of damage is an invaluable resource to landowners and townships. Beavers are amazing engineers and Eric comes in and explains what’s going on, removes the beaver and is great to work with.”

*- Loran Heesch
Roberts County landowner
and Lien Township
Supervisor*



Canada goose buffer strip around wetlands in Day County.



Wildlife Damage Specialist, Glen Sterling, sets a coyote snare in Sanborn County.

appear at numerous other public meetings throughout the year. Administrators routinely interact with stakeholder groups such as the WDM Working Group, ADC Policy Advisory Committee, South Dakota Stockgrowers, predator district boards, South Dakota Sheep Growers, South Dakota Cattlemen, South Dakota Ag Unity, GFP Commission, and other organizations, policymakers, and groups. They also coordinate management activities and operations with other partners such as USDA-WS, USDA Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources, South Dakota Office of School and Public Lands, and other state and federal agencies, as well as cooperate on wildlife damage research with universities and USDA National Wildlife Research Center.

Program accountability is an important element for GFP, and it's critical that our constituents' needs are being

“Randy has been very good to work with for our needs here at Jamesville Colony to help control Avian Bird Flu in our turkey barns by dropping off propane cannons, hazing pistols, and helping the boys figure out a couple cannons not operating properly. He always responds in a timely manner.”

- Ernest for Jamesville Hutterian Colony, Turkey barn boss

“The Canada goose kill permit has been great. It gives us landowners an option to help ourselves. I also want to thank you guys (Greg and Stacey) for all of the help over the years. You have been good to work with.”

*- Jim Anderson
McCook and
Lake County producer*

met by our programs and services as well as providing accountability to the sportsmen and women who provide funding for these important programs. Over the past five years, GFP has made a considerable effort to demonstrate accountability and transparency through enhanced public communication efforts.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Customer Service Survey¹

To measure excellence in customer service and program transparency, GFP conducted a customer service survey in 2022. The survey was administered online and was limited to participants who provided an email address to GFP.

In addition to customer service-related questions, survey participants were asked about five aspects related to their wildlife-associated damage during 2021. The customer service survey response rate (29 percent) was lower than desired; however, of those responding, 80 percent indicated they did not have difficulty finding information about how to contact GFP regarding their wildlife damage.

¹WDM Strategic Plan: Goal 1, strategy 6, Develop and implement a meaningful and cost-effective way to determine customer satisfaction and program successes.

²WDM Strategic Plan: Goal 3, strategy 5, Improve habitat and food plot options to mitigate wildlife damage from Canada geese.

³WDM Strategic Plan: Goal 3, strategy 6. Identify opportunities to improve efficiencies in delivery of program services, tracking of work and accountability.

Overall, respondents indicated GFP staff were knowledgeable, professional, and responsive to their concerns. Over half (60 percent) of the respondents said they originally contacted GFP about goose damage, followed by 27 percent coyote damage, and 22 percent beaver damage.

When asked about their level of satisfaction of services provided, customers most often reported being “very satisfied” with beaver and coyote damage services and “somewhat satisfied” to “very satisfied” with deer and goose damage services.

Effectiveness of the WDM program in addressing their damage ranged from “very effective” for beaver damage to “moderately effective” for goose, coyote, and deer damage.

GFP will continue to review tools and techniques used to reduce wildlife-associated damage and strives toward providing a comprehensive WDM program in South Dakota.

The full customer service survey report can be found at gfp.sd.gov/landowner-programs.

Mitigating Damage from Canada Geese²

Canada goose depredation assistance has increased over the years with a recent increase in the resident goose population and damage to growing soybeans. GFP is challenged to realign staff, fiscal, and equipment resources to ensure crop loss is minimized. Habitat and access are an overall priority for GFP and both tie in to minimizing goose depredation.

One goal is to provide more grasslands, buffers, and wetland areas on public and private lands for geese to raise young

and feed without damaging neighboring crops, in addition, allowing hunters to be part of the solution by creating additional hunting access in key areas.

Rather than attempt to temporarily fix the same problem areas year after year, GFP staff worked with landowners to find longer-term solutions that would better address their goose depredation challenges. Permanent mesh fencing, goose abatement buffer strips, and hunter access are a few examples of long-term solutions to reduce damage in areas with chronic damage caused by Canada geese.

This past year, staff helped sign up four new permanent fencing contracts and three abatement buffer strip contracts. In addition, staff worked with cooperating landowners to sign up fields (nearly 6,000 acres) into a temporary Canada goose hunter access program. The access program is open only for goose hunting during the August Management Take and Early Fall Goose hunting seasons.

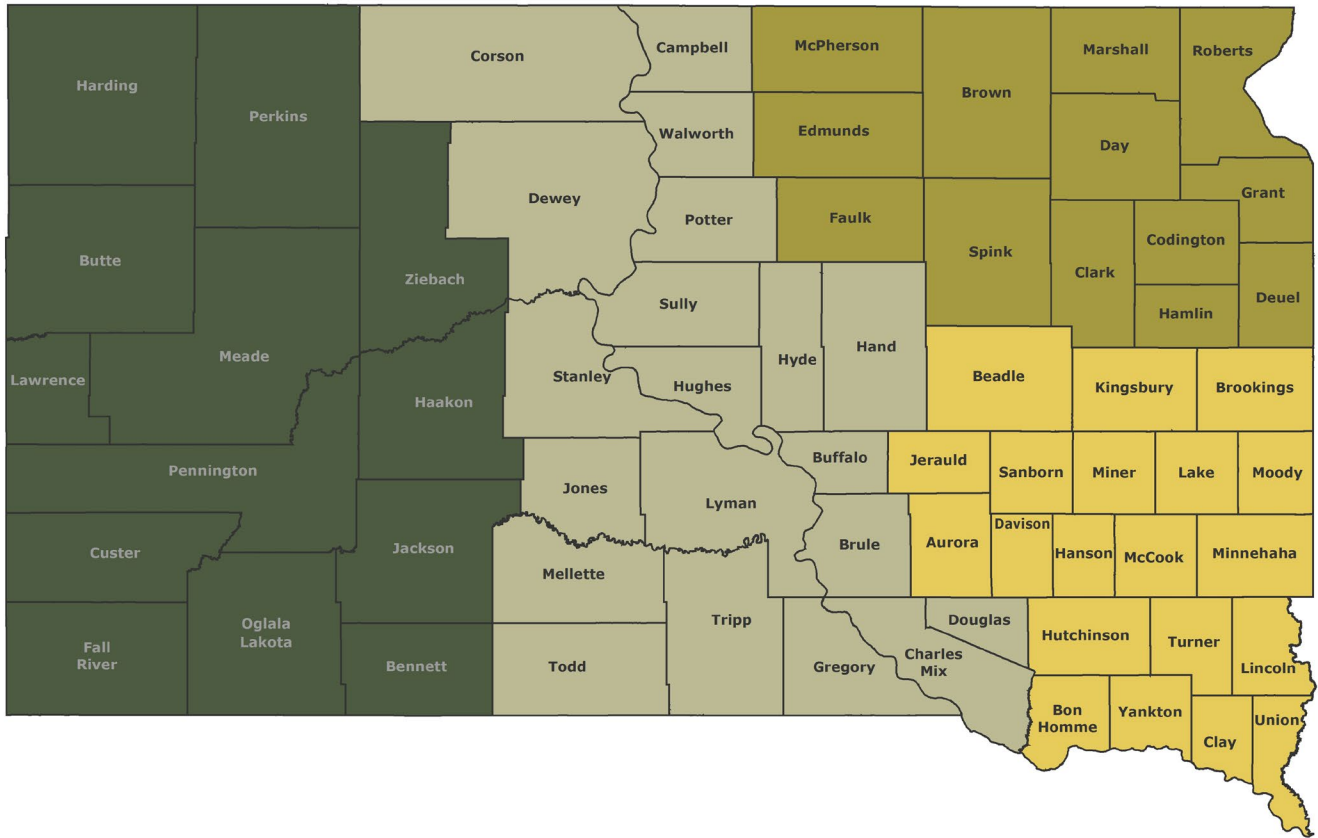
New Online Sign Up³

Producers can now request help online. An efficient, online system was developed for landowners to request service to help reduce damage caused by Canada geese. This new system allowed producers to select on a map exactly where the damage is occurring and enter their contact information. An automated message was then routed to respective staff. Public computers were available at GFP offices for producers who did not have internet access.

This new system speeds up response time, reduces paperwork, and efficiently allocates response tools. Over 400 different producers utilized the online system last year.

DIVISION OF WILDLIFE ADMINISTRATIVE REGIONS

The Division of Wildlife’s Operations Section is divided into four administrative regions. Each region works under the supervision of a regional supervisor along with other assistant supervisory staff. Each region then has assorted field staff who conduct the “on-the-ground” work and services to the citizens of South Dakota.



REGION 1 (WESTERN)

Bennett, Butte, Custer, Fall River, Haakon, Harding, Jackson, Lawrence, Meade, Pennington, Perkins, Shannon, and Ziebach.

REGION 2 (CENTRAL)

Brule, Buffalo, Campbell, Charles Mix, Corson, Dewey, Douglas, Gregory, Hand, Hughes, Hyde, Jones, Lyman, Mellette, Potter, Stanley, Sully, Todd, Tripp, and Walworth.

REGION 3 (SOUTHEAST)

Aurora, Beadle, Bon Homme, Brookings, Clay, Davison, Hanson, Hutchinson, Jerald, Kingsbury, Lake, Lincoln, McCook, Miner, Minnehaha, Moody, Sanborn, Turner, Union, and Yankton.

REGION 4 (NORTHEAST)

Brown, Clark, Codington, Day, Deuel, Edmunds, Faulk, Grant, Hamlin, Marshall, McPherson, Roberts, and Spink.

SOUTH DAKOTA GAME, FISH AND PARKS ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

KEVIN ROBLING, Department Secretary

TOM KIRSCHENMANN, Wildlife Division Director

CHAD SWITZER, Wildlife Division Deputy Director

JOHN KANTA, Terrestrial Section Chief

MIKE KLOSOWSKI, Regional Wildlife Supervisor | Region 1 (West)

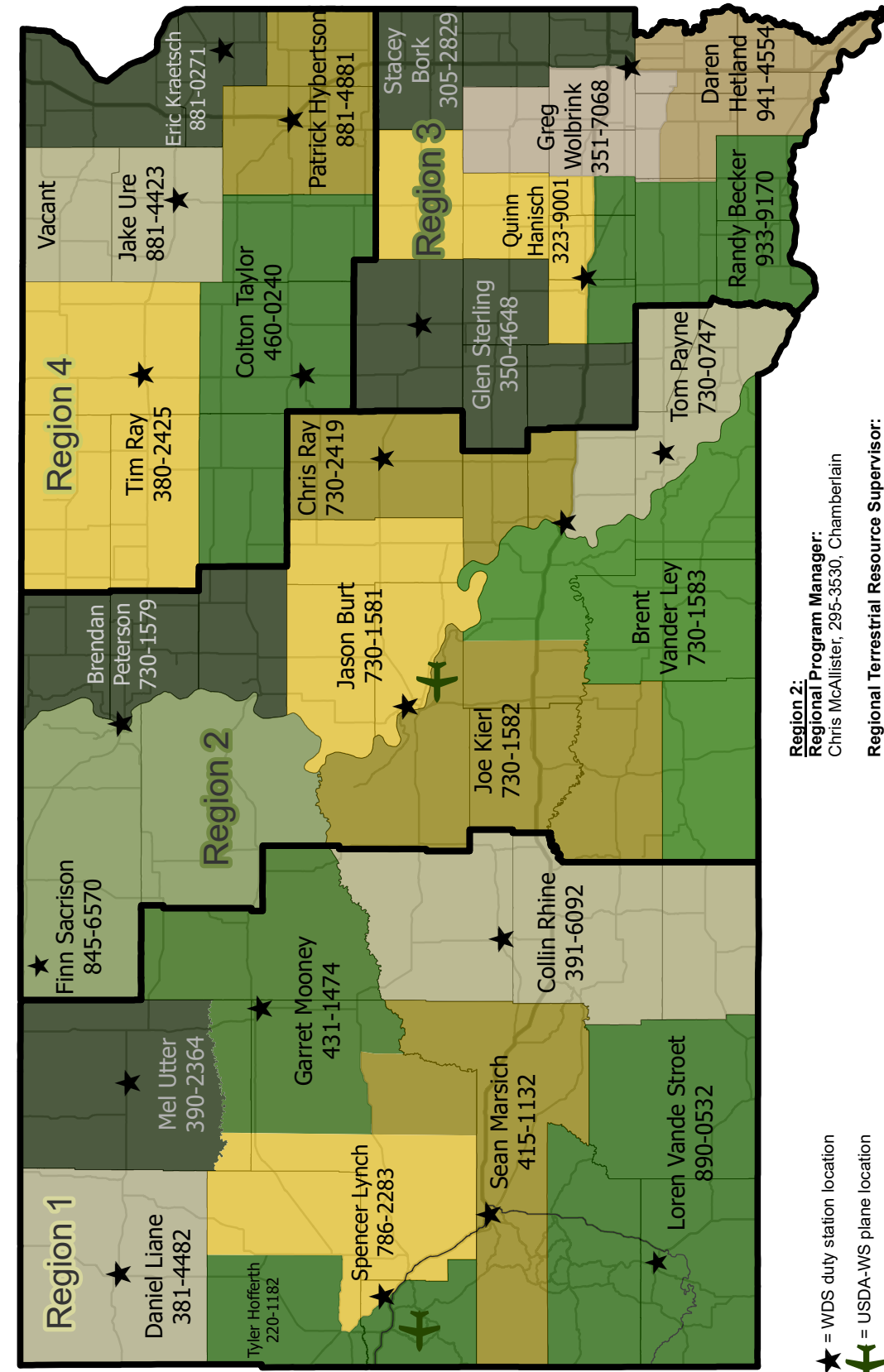
MARK OHM, Regional Wildlife Supervisor | Region 2 (Central)

EMMETT KEYSER, Regional Wildlife Supervisor | Region 3 (Southeast)

JACQUIE ERMER, Regional Wildlife Supervisor | Region 4 (Northeast)



South Dakota GFP Wildlife Damage Management Program



Region 4
Regional Program Manager:
Nick Rossman
881-8404
Watertown

Regional Terrestrial Resource Supervisor:
Dan Sternhagen
695-3718
Watertown

Region 3
Regional Program Manager:
Brad Baumgartner
941-1578
Sioux Falls

Regional Terrestrial Resource Supervisor:
Julie Lindstrom
362-2700
Sioux Falls

Region 2
Regional Program Manager:
Chris McAllister, 295-3530, Chamberlain

Regional Terrestrial Resource Supervisor:
Nathan Baker, 280-1468, Fort Pierre

Region 1
Houndsman & Black Hills Municipalities:
Chad Sebade
381-9996
Rapid City

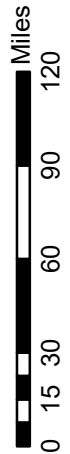
Regional Program Manager:
Jack Alexander
391-1576
Rapid City

Regional Terrestrial Resource Supervisor:
Trenton Hatfield
320-224-3572
Rapid City

Regional Supervisor:
Mike Klosowski
880-1175
Rapid City

★ = WDS duty station location

✈ = USDA-WS plane location



STATEWIDE PROGRAM REPORT AND SUMMARY

The state of South Dakota consists of 66 counties and has a diverse landscape from east to west as well as from north to south. This diverse landscape includes croplands, grasslands, wetlands and lakes, rugged river drainages, badlands, and the Black Hills. These varying landscapes also present their own unique set of challenges due to the wildlife species that are present, weather conditions, and population acceptance levels. South Dakota has an abundance of wildlife species and includes populations of white-tailed deer, mule deer, upland game birds, waterfowl, pronghorn, elk, furbearers, turkeys, and mountain lions.

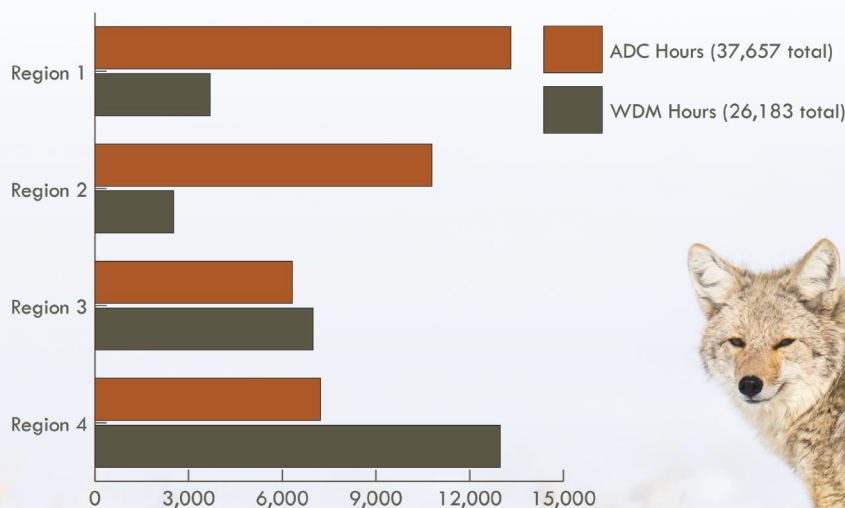
Twenty-eight full-time wildlife damage specialists, numerous seasonal employees, and other Game, Fish, and Parks (GFP) staff, provide the “boots-on-the-ground” delivery of the important Wildlife Damage

Management (WDM) programs and services. These programs provide direct assistance to South Dakota producers and landowners when wildlife damage concerns arise. GFP primarily provides depredation assistance with beaver, Canada geese, coyote, deer, elk, fox, mountain lions, nuisance animals, pheasant, pronghorn, turkey, as well as other wildlife species.

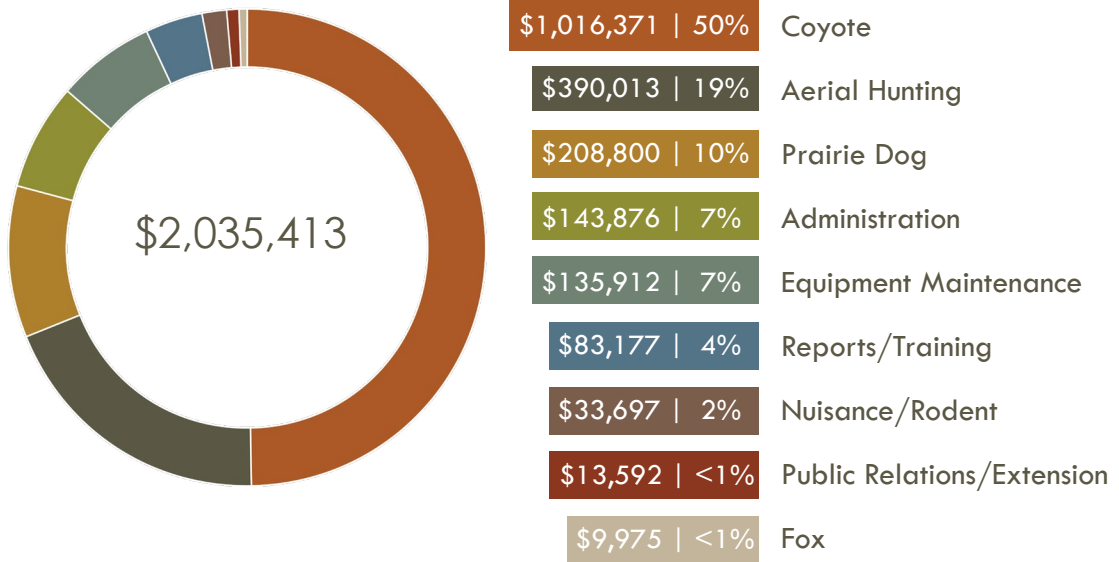
The following graphs and maps show statewide as well as county breakdown of expenditures and services provided by the WDM program.

Included in those maps are producers that were assisted by staff with 25 permanent stackyard, secure cover, and protective fencing contracts for deer; 83 food plot, hay land, stackyard, and cable contracts for elk; and six buffer strip and permanent fence contracts for Canada geese.

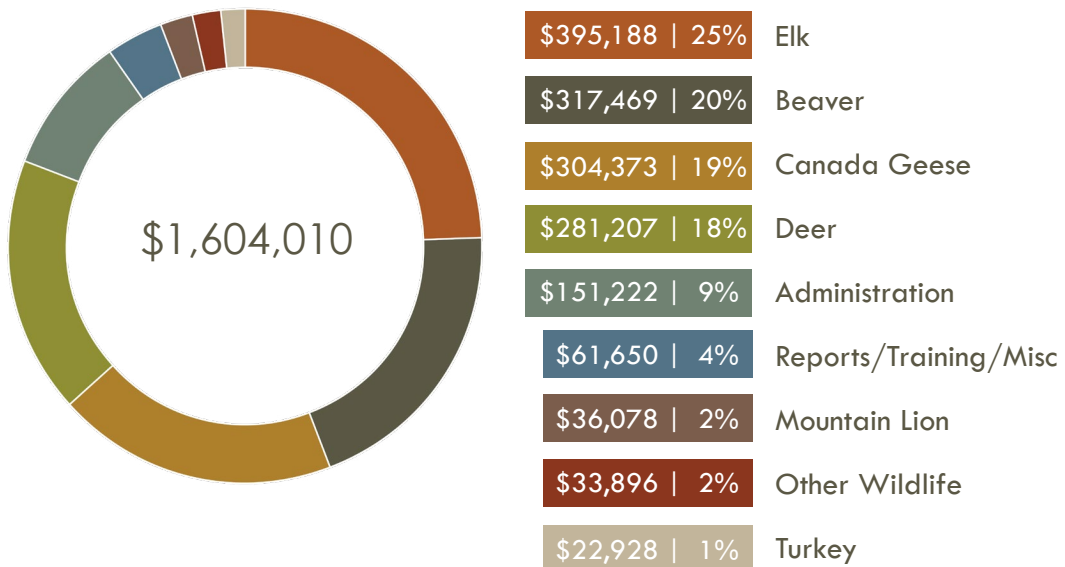
2022 STAFF HOURS 63,840 TOTAL HOURS



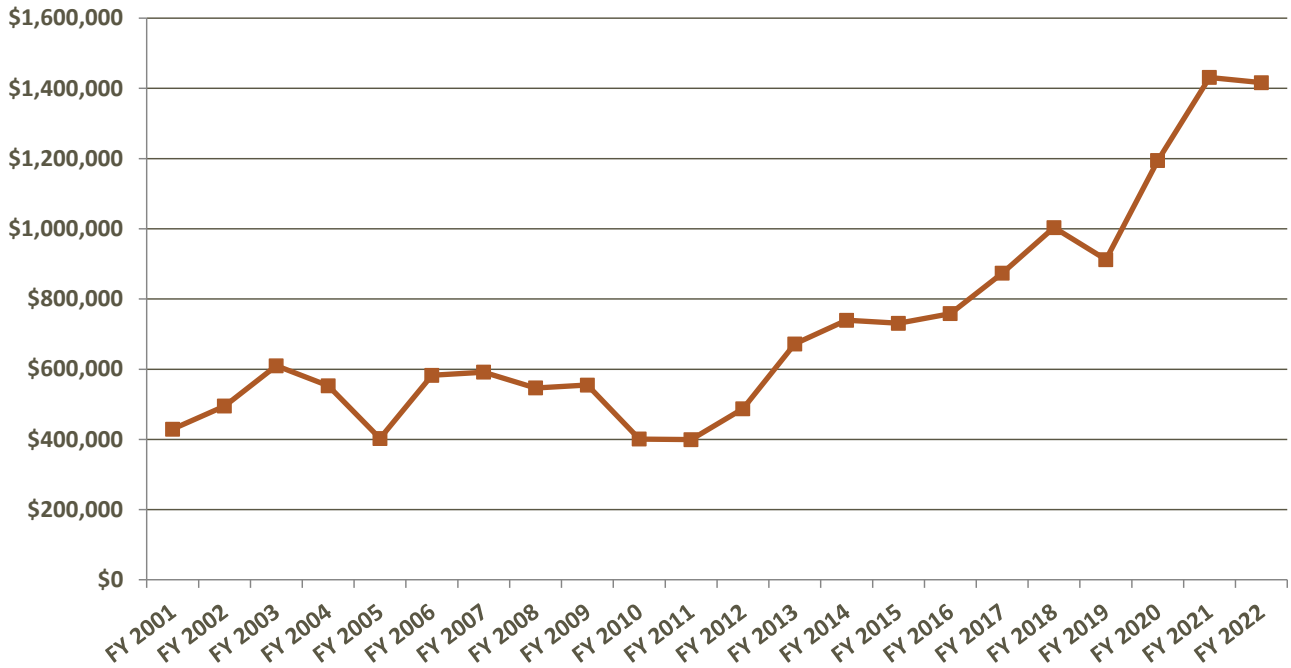
ANIMAL DAMAGE CONTROL EXPENDITURES - FY2022



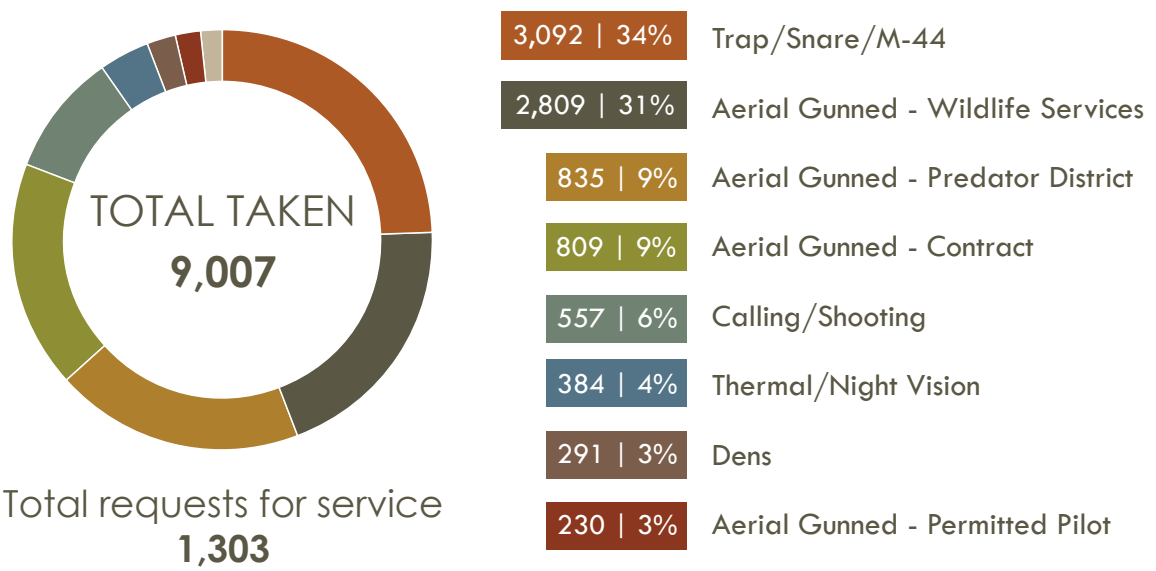
WILDLIFE DAMAGE MANAGEMENT EXPENDITURES - FY2022



PREDATOR CONTROL EXPENDITURES

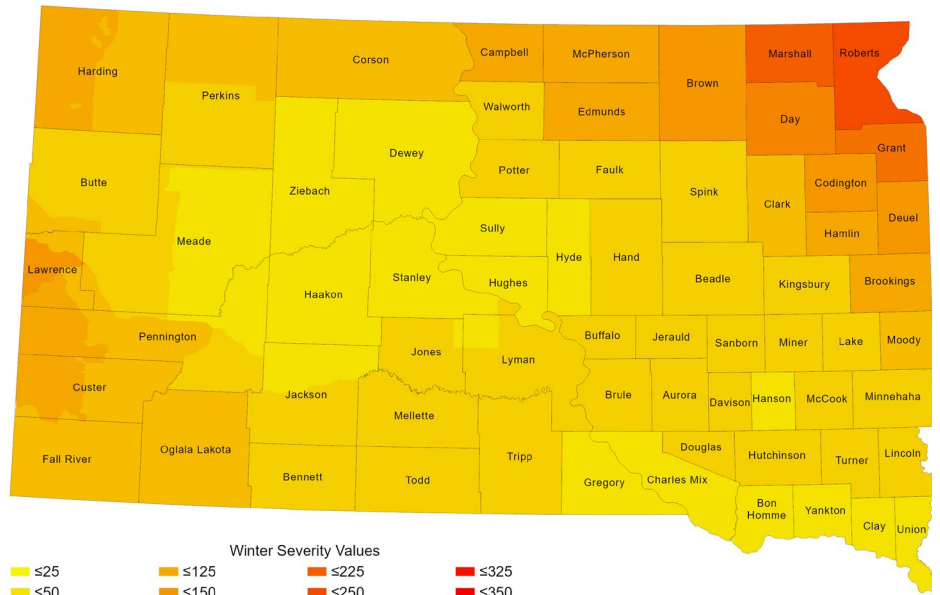


COYOTES/FOX TAKEN BY METHOD



2022 WINTER SEVERITY INDEX

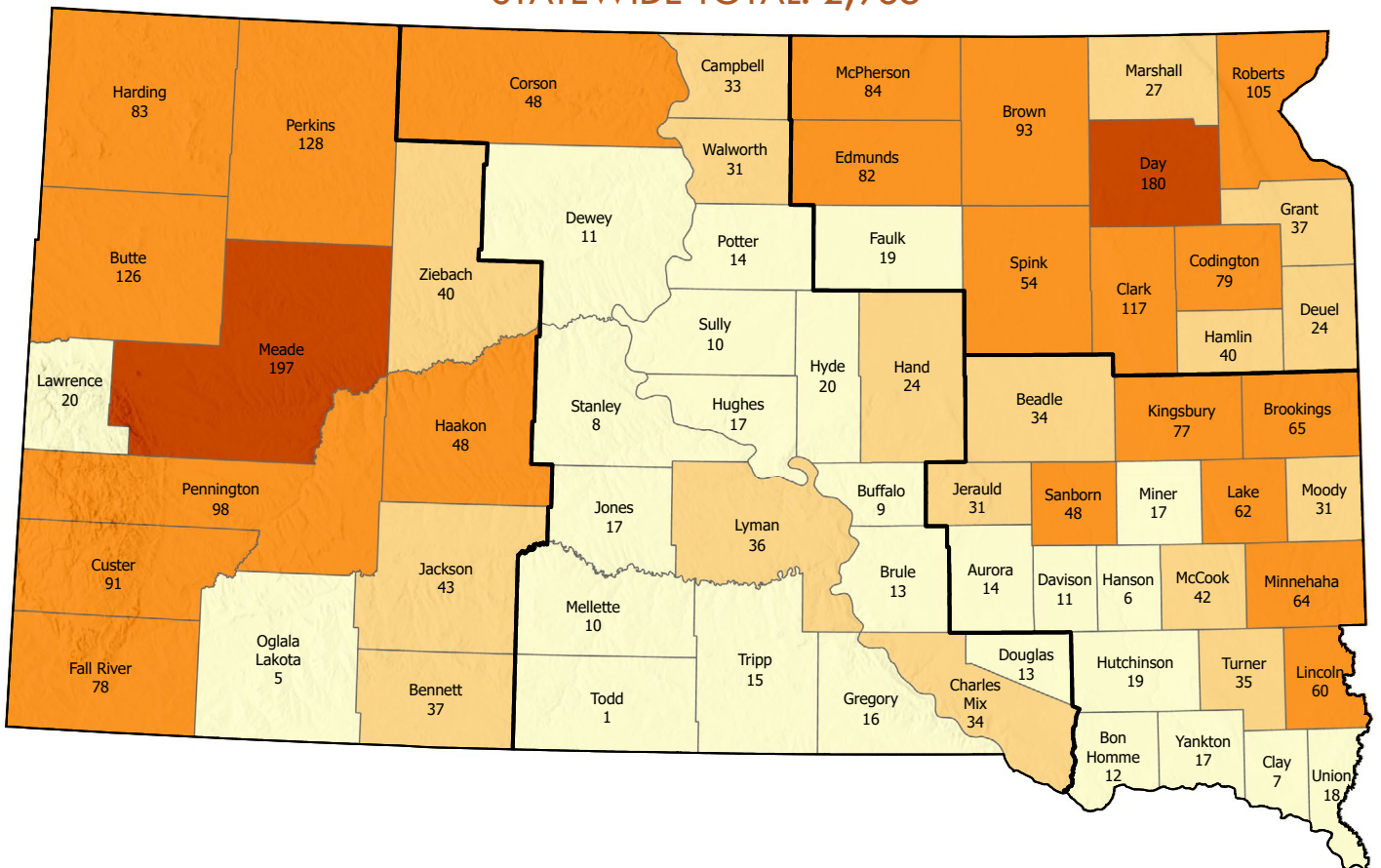
Weather conditions can certainly play a role in the number of requests for service that GFP receives for wildlife causing damage to growing crops or stored feed supplies. Drought conditions fluctuated throughout summer and fall, ranging from normal to extreme drought conditions depending on location. Overall, the winter of 2022 was mild compared to long-term averages except in the northeast which experienced a tougher winter than normal. Winter Severity Indices were calculated for November 2021 – April 2022. As depicted, values are mostly below normal (mild) for severity. Extremely severe winters can have values over 400; averages for winter 2022 for most of the state were less than 100.



TOTAL WILDLIFE DAMAGE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM REQUESTS FOR SERVICE

(INCLUDES ALL SPECIES, PRIMARILY COYOTES, DEER, ELK, CANADA GEESE, BEAVER, AND NUISANCE SPECIES)

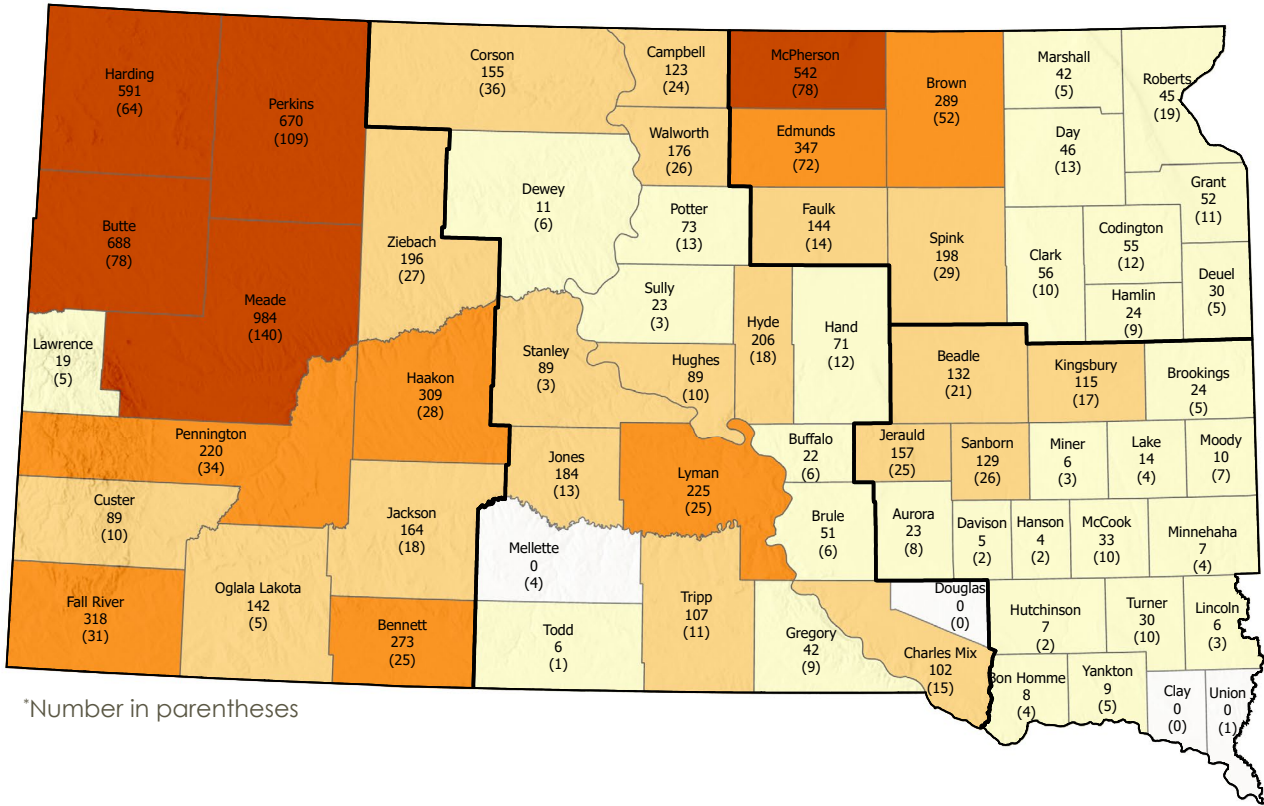
STATEWIDE TOTAL: 2,985



TOTAL REQUESTS FOR SERVICE AND TAKE BY COUNTY (COYOTES AND FOX ONLY)

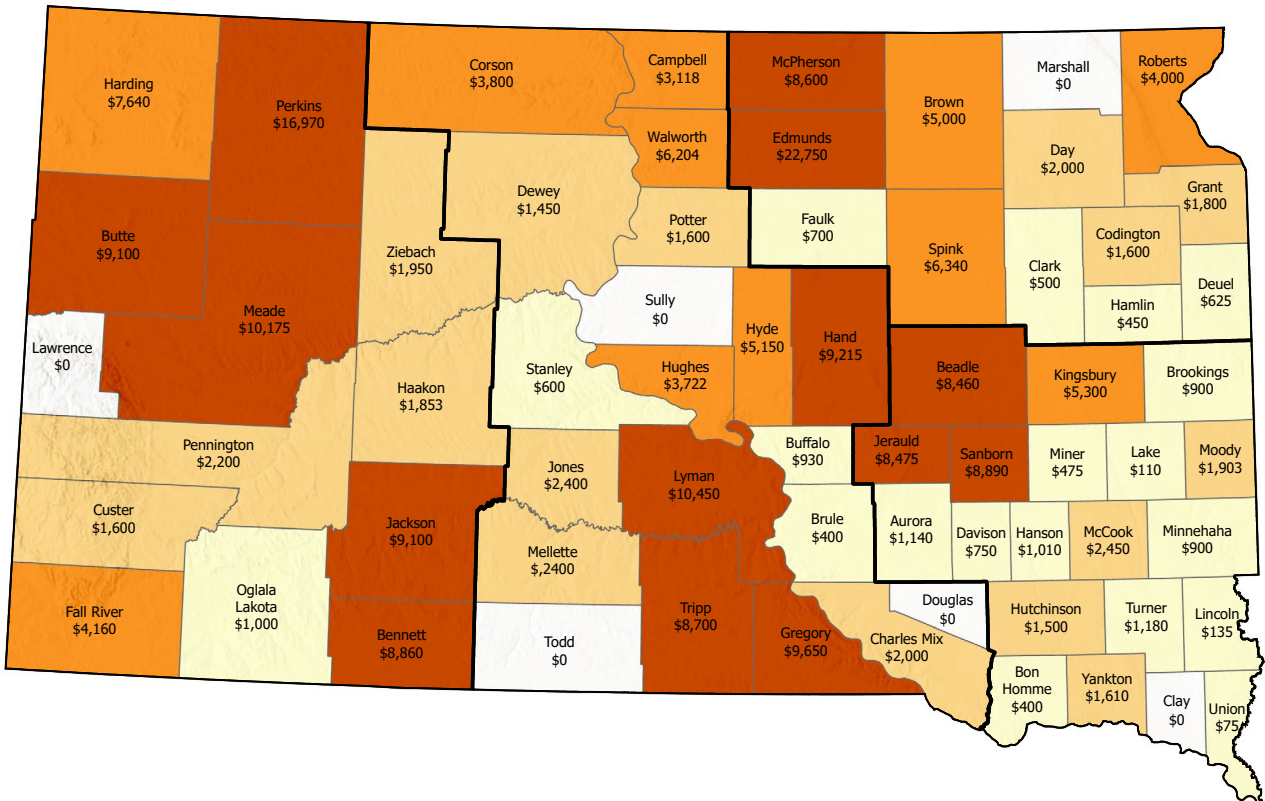
Total take: 9,007

Request for service*: 1,303



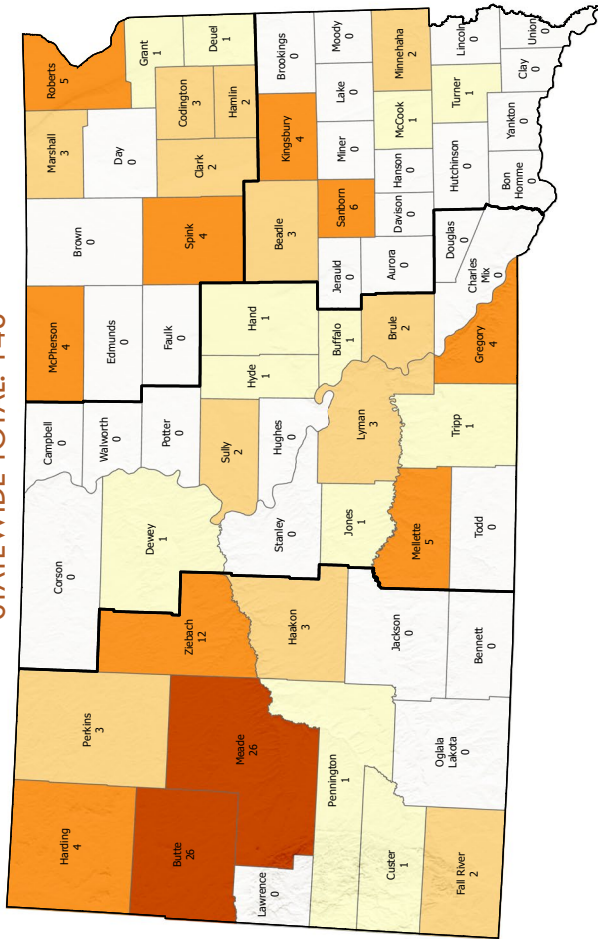
*Number in parentheses

ESTIMATED MONETARY DAMAGES BY COUNTY based on request for service (COYOTES AND FOX ONLY) \$246,426



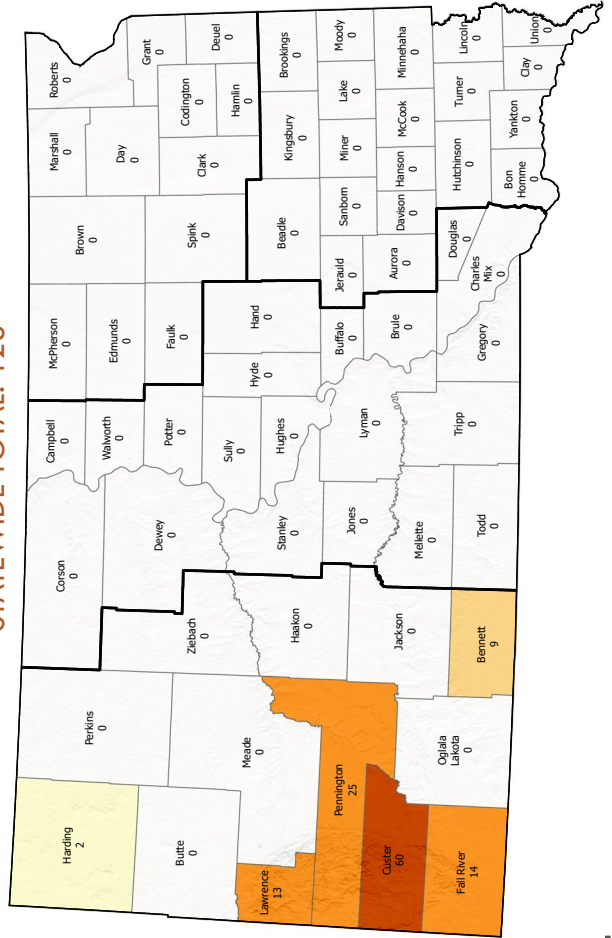
**DEER REQUESTS FOR SERVICE | MULE AND WHITE-TAILED DEER
(INCLUDES STACKYARD AND PANEL AGREEMENTS)**

STATEWIDE TOTAL: 143

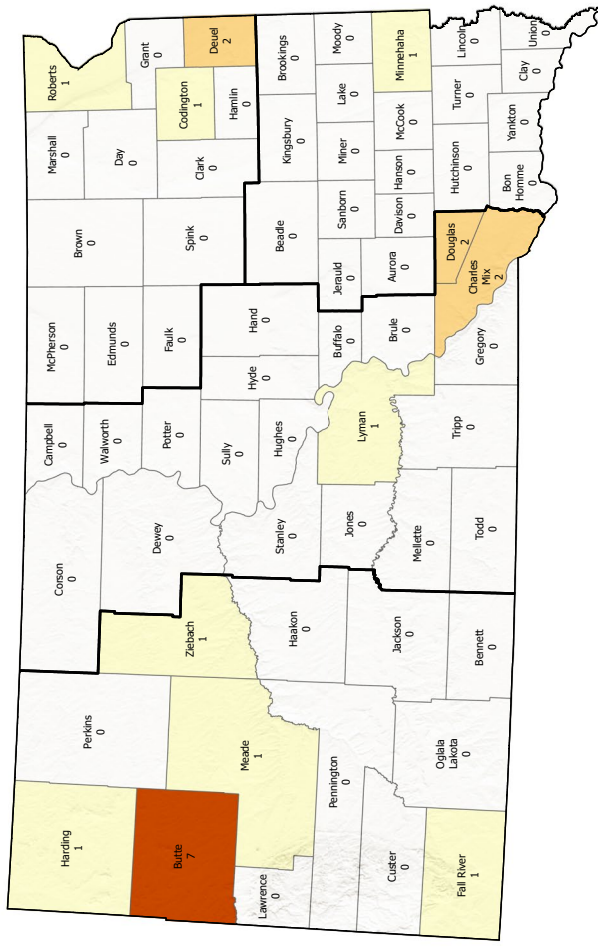


**ELK REQUESTS FOR SERVICE
(INCLUDES ELK FOOD PLOT AND HAYLAND AGREEMENTS)**

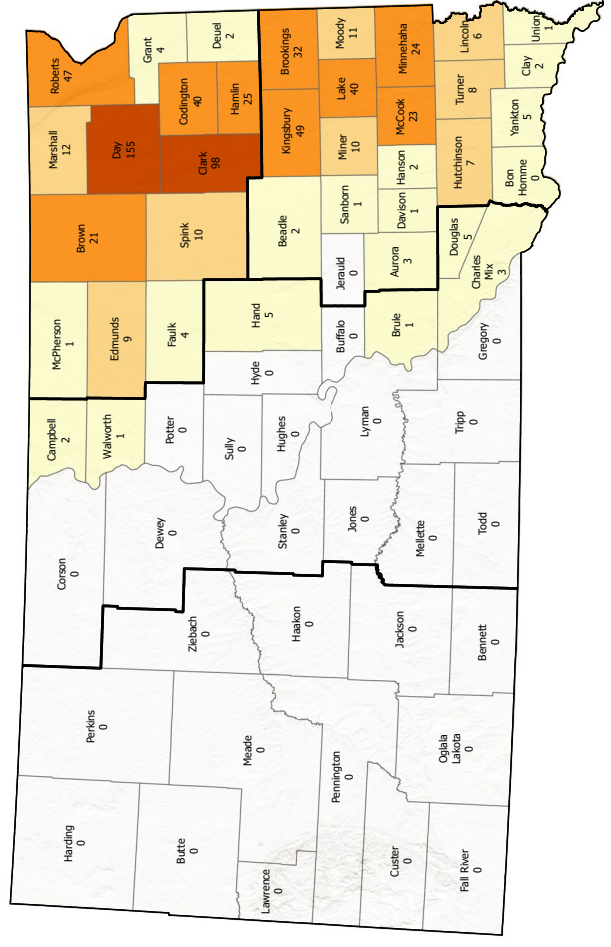
STATEWIDE TOTAL: 123



**TURKEY REQUESTS FOR SERVICE
STATEWIDE TOTAL: 21**

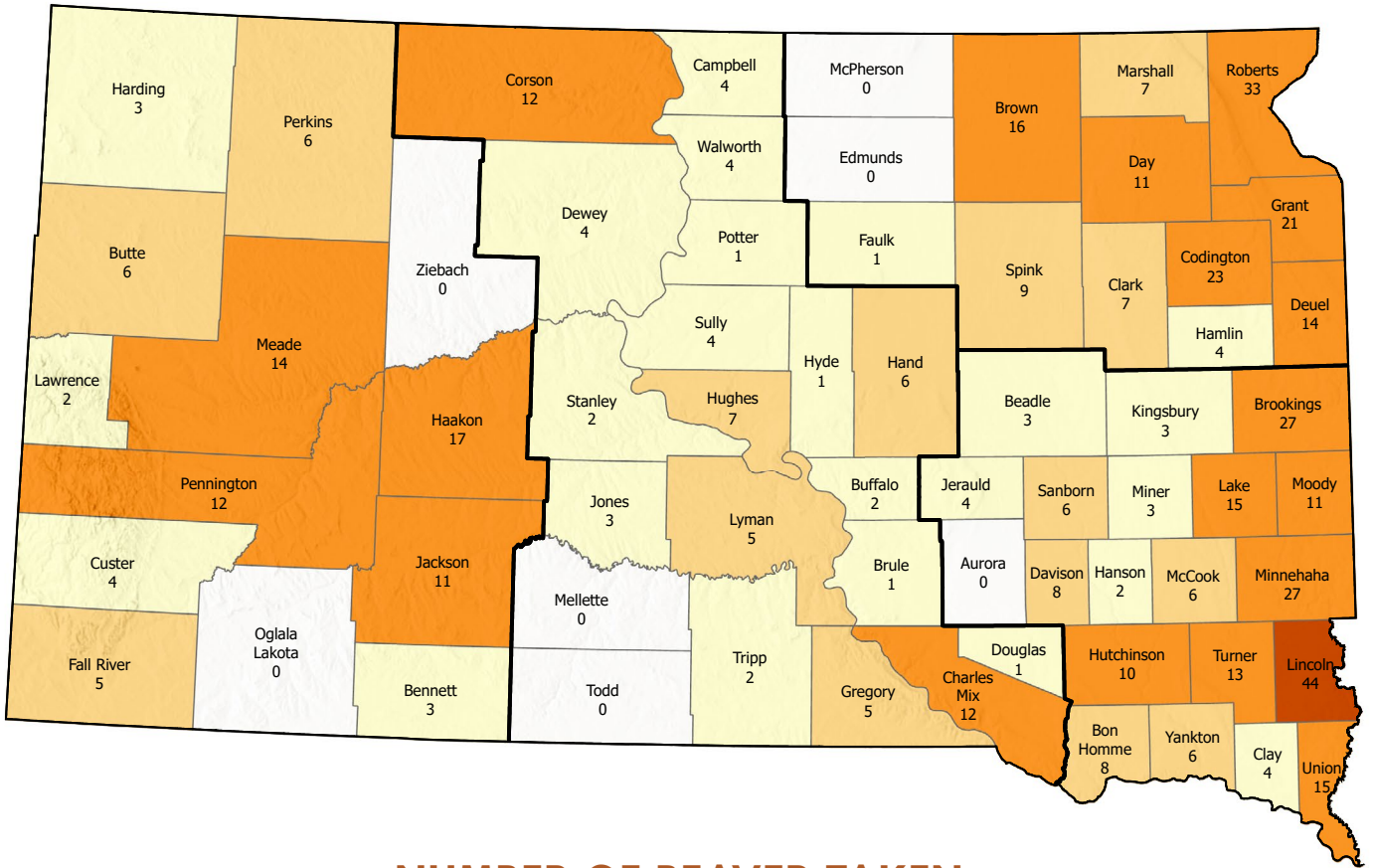


**CANADA GOOSE REQUESTS FOR SERVICE
STATEWIDE TOTAL: 672**



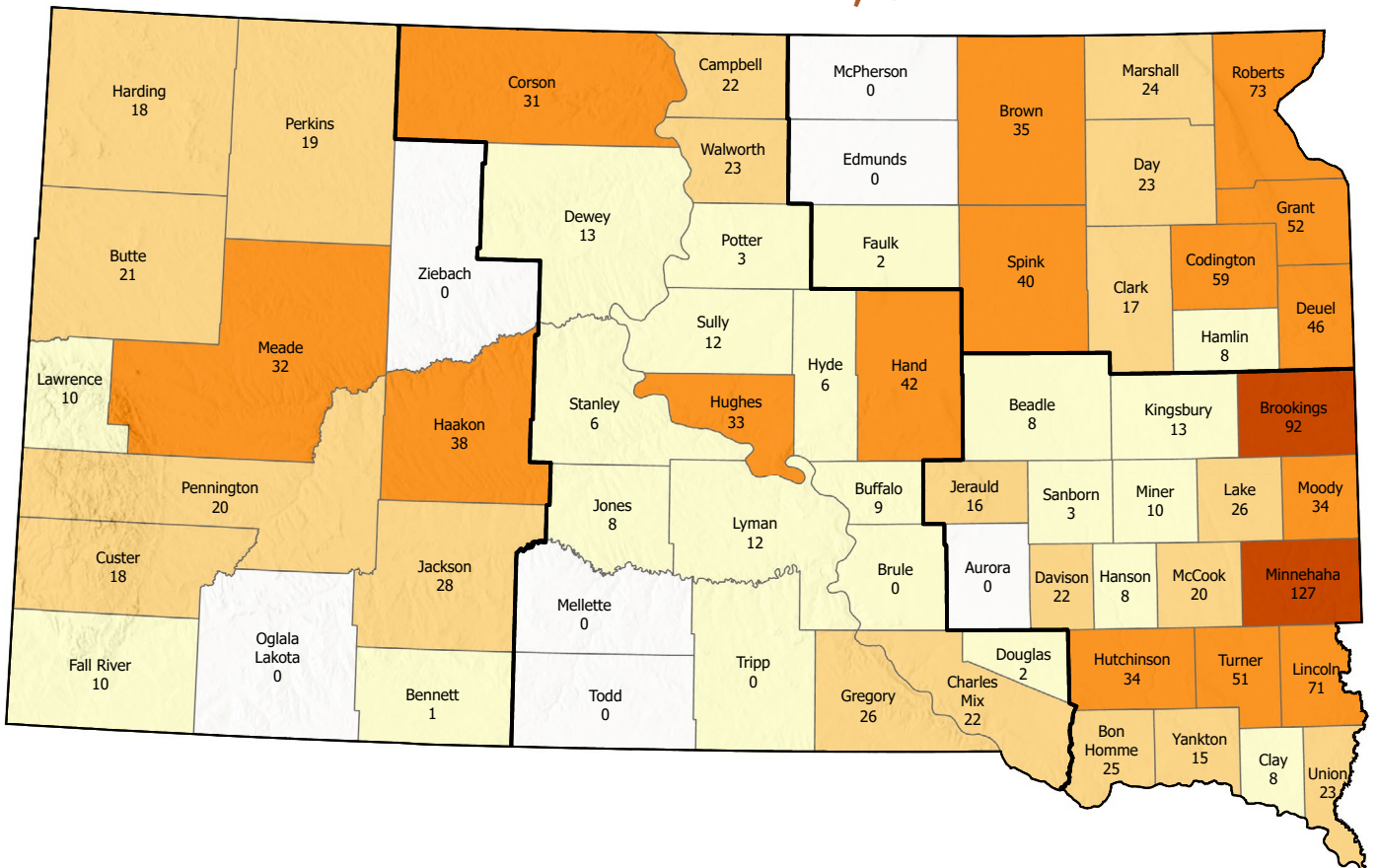
BEAVER REQUESTS FOR SERVICE

STATEWIDE TOTAL: 520



NUMBER OF BEAVER TAKEN

STATEWIDE TOTAL: 1,470





GFP.SD.GOV

