SOUTH DAKOTA GAME, FISH AND PARKS
COMMISSION MEETING AGENDA

MARCH 7-8, 2024 | MISSOURI AVENUE EVENTS CENTER | PIERRE, SD

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

Division of Administration

Action Items

1. New Commissioner Introduction
2. Conflict of Interest Disclosure
3. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes available at https://gfp.sd.gov/commission/archives
4. Additional Commissioner Salary Days

Informational Items

5. 2024 Legislative Items Update
6. South Dakota Shooting Sports Complex Update
7. South Dakota Go Outdoors Update
8. New Staff Introductions

Open Forum – 2 pm CST / 1 pm MT

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

Petition

9. Deer Draw Structure

Proposals

10. Use of Parks and Public Lands: Tree Stand and Trail Cameras
11. Time Restrictions for Use of State Park Systems and Public Lands
12. Bighorn Sheep Hunting
    a. Bighorn Sheep Hunting Season
    b. Bighorn Sheep Hunting License Allocation
13. Custer State Park Hunting Seasons
    a. Custer State Park Bison
    b. Custer State Park Coyote Hunting Season
14. Small Game Hunting Seasons
    a. Grouse Hunting Season
    b. Pheasant Hunting Season
    c. Partridge Hunting Season
    d. Quail Hunting Season
    e. Cottontail Rabbit Hunting Season
    f. Tree Squirrel Hunting Season
    g. Crow Hunting Season
    h. Snipe Hunting Season
    i. Mourning Dove Hunting Season

15. Waterfowl Hunting Seasons
    a. August Management Take
    b. Nonresident Waterfowl Hunting Seasons
16. Elk Hunting Presentation and Proposals
    a. Custer State Park Early Archery Elk Hunting Season
    b. Custer State Park Early Archery Elk Hunting License Allocation
    c. Custer State Park Firearm Elk Hunting Season
    d. Custer State Park Firearm Elk Hunting License Allocation
    e. Special Custer State Park Antlerless Elk Hunting Season
    f. Black Hills Archery Elk Hunting Season
    g. Black Hills Archery Elk Hunting License Allocation
    h. Black Hills Firearm Elk Hunting Season
    i. Black Hills Firearm Elk Hunting License Allocation
    j. Prairie Elk Hunting Season
    k. Prairie Elk Hunting License Allocation

Division of Parks and Recreation

Informational Items

17. Go Forth, Parks RX, and Library Checkout
18. Marketing Update
19. Revenue and Camping Reports

Division of Wildlife

Informational Items

20. Avian Influenza Update
21. Nest Predator Bounty Program
22. Ring-necked Pheasant Action Plan
23. Deer Action Plan
24. Bobcat Management and Action Plans
25. Lake Oahe Update
26. License Sales Reports

Solicitation of Agenda Items

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

Adjourn

A Commissioner Governance Meeting will be held on April 4, 2024, starting at 9 am CST, at the Matthews Training Center in Pierre, South Dakota. The next Regular Commission Meeting will be held on April 4-5, 2024, starting at 1 pm CST also in the Matthew Training Center.

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks
Regular Commission Meeting Minutes

Matthews Training Center | Pierre, South Dakota | January 11-12, 2024

Call Meeting to Order

Chair Rissler called the meeting to order at 1 pm CST at the Matthews Training Center located in the Joe Foss Building in Pierre, South Dakota, on January 11, 2024. Commissioners Stephanie Rissler, Julie Bartling, Jim White, Robert Whitmyre, Jon Locken, Travis Bies, Chuck Spring and Bruce Cull were present. [Note: Commissioner Cull had an excused absence on day two of the meeting.] With eight commission members present, a quorum was established. The public and staff can listen via SDPB Livestream and participate via conference or in person, with approximately 70 total participants attending via Zoom or in person.

1. Conflict of Interest Disclosure [Action Item]

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

2. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes [Action Item]

Chair Rissler called for any additions or corrections to the regular minutes of December 2023 meeting. Minutes are available at https://gfp.sd.gov/commission/archives/.

MOTIONED BY CULL, SECONDED BY BARTLILNG TO APPROVE THE DECEMBER 2023 REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES. The motion carried unanimously.

3. Additional Salary Days [Action Item]

Chair Rissler called for additional salary days from the Commissioners. Whitmyre, Bies, and Spring each submitted one additional salary days.

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

4. Election of Officers [Action Item]

Chair Rissler opened the floor to nominations for the Commission Officer Positions.

MOTIONED BY CULL, SECONDED BY WHITE TO NOMINATE RISSLER FOR CHAIR. The motion carried unanimously.

MTIONED BY WHITMYRE, SECONDED BY BARTLING TO NOMINATE BIES FOR VICE-CHAIR. The motion carried unanimously.

5. 2024 Legislative Item Update [Info Item]

Secretary Robling gave a brief update on the legislative items being brought during the 2024 legislative session.

6. Strategic Plan Year in Review [Action Item]

Deputy Secretary Simpson gave an overview of the Strategic Plan and the Department's achievements in 2023.

7. New Staff Introduction [Info Item]

Secretary Robling and Wildlife Director Kirschenmann introduced several new staff throughout the department to the Commissioners.

Open Forum

Deputy Secretary Scott Simpson opened the floor at 2:01 pm CST for discussion from those in attendance in matters of importance to them that are listed on the agenda not as a finalization or may not be on the agenda.

- 2:03 pm: Bills Hinds, representing the Lake Oahe Walleye Restoration Coalition discussed the Aquatic Management Priorities.
- 2:07 pm: Bill Waeckerle, representing the Lake Oahe Walleye Restoration Coalition discussed the Aquatic Management Priorities.

Deputy Secretary Simpson closed the Open Forum at 2:11 pm CST.

8. Petition #207: Elk Preference Points [Action Item]

Steven Swanson of Rapid City submitted Petition #207 in which requested the Commission to give one any elk tag to a hunter over the age of 65 and also has over 100 years of elk preference in different season.

Wildlife Director Kirschenmann informed the Commission that elk hunting in South Dakota exceeds supply and demand and continues to increase with limited opportunities to expand elk populations that allow hunting opportunities. He also stated that there were 53 individuals that were 65 years of age or older and held more than 100 combined elk preference points, and 165 that were younger than 65 years old that held more than 100 combined elk preference points. The average expected wait for drawing a Black Hills archery or firearm any elk license was 18 years, the average expected wait time for Custer State Park archery any elk license was 35 years, and the average expected wait for drawing a Custer State Park firearm any elk license was 52 years. The current license draw procedure produced all individuals with an opportunity to draw a license, but individuals with more preference points have a greater opportunity because preference points are cubed and a random draw in conducted using each preference point.

MOTIONED BY BIES, SECONDED BY LOCKEN TO DENY PETITION #207. The motion carried unanimously.

MOTIONED BY WHITMYRE, SECONDED BY BIES TO ADOPT RESOLUTION 24-01. The motion carried unanimously.

9. Petition #208: Landowner Own Land Deer Seasons [Action Item]

Layton Hendrickson of Bison submitted Petition #208 in which requested the Commission make Landowners on their own land deer tags valid from September 1 to January 1, similar to the free antlerless tags. He requested that the Landowner on Own Land Deer Tags be only valid for a firearm during the standard rifle season and also valid with legal archery equipment for the remaining dates while keep this tag only valid for owned/operated land.

Wildlife Director Kirschenmann informed the commission that the intent of free antlerless licenses was established as a tool for landowners to address local deer numbers and associated depredation; whereas landowner own land licenses are to assure a landowner a guaranteed opportunity to hunt and harvest deer on their own land. A resident that obtains a landowner own land firearm any deer license can purchase an archery any deer license that is valid from September 1 to January 1. SD Codified Law § 41-6-19.3 limited landowner own land deer licenses to firearm season dates for West River Deer, East River Deer, and Black Hills Deer.

MOTIONED BY WHITMYRE, SECONDED BY BARTLING TO DENY PETITION #208. The motion carried unanimously.

MOTIONED BY BARTLING, SECONDED BY SPRING TO ADOPT RESOLUTION 24-02 DENYING PETITION #208. The motion carried unanimously.

10. Bighorn Sheep Hunting Season Proposal [Action Item]

Chad Lehman, Senior Wildlife Biologist, presented to the Commission a summary of the latest bighorn sheep management in the form of fall and winter survey counts and harvest recommendations. Following the conclusion of the presentation, Andrew Norton, Wildlife Program Administrator, brought forth the Department recommendations to increase the number of bighorn sheep licenses from 11 to 16. Specifically, recommendations were to increase 4 ram licenses in the Hell Canyon unit (BH4) to 8 licenses and 3 ram licenses in the Custer State Park unit (CU1) to 4 licenses. There was also discussion about providing ram hunting opportunity for the Rapid City unit (BH1). Any potential changes to license numbers and the Bighorn Sheep Hunting Seasons will be further discussed at the March Commission meeting.

MOTIONED BY WHITE, SECONDED BY CULL TO APPROVE THE PROPOSED CHANGES, BRINGING FINALIZATION IN THE APRIL 2024 MEETING. The motion carried unanimously.

11. Waterfowl Hunting Seasons Proposals [Action Item]

Rocco Murano, Senior Wildlife Biologist, presented to the Commission a Waterfowl Status and Season Setting presentation. He gave the Commission a quick overview of the migratory bird regulatory and season setting process. He explained flyway and federal responsibilities and how they dovetailed into South Dakotas state season setting process. Rocco next explained how habitat and population numbers are estimated annually through operational monitoring programs. The results of the 2023 habitat and population survey were then discussed. The Commission was next briefed on federal waterfowl season frameworks and how they served as the bounds from which we select our seasons and how we can always be more conservative than federal frameworks but not more liberal. Rocco then went through the Adaptive Harvest Management process and explained the decision matrix for the upcoming duck season indicating a liberal harvest package was recommended. Rocco next discussed duck hunter trends and the long term declines that SD is seeing in resident duck hunter participation. Switching gears to geese, Rocco explained Canada goose population trends and how an issue with the visual correction factor in the 2022 survey inflated (402,000) the estimate beyond what was reasonable. We seem to have had a good survey in 2023 and the estimate of 145,000 fell in line with what we saw from a goose depredation standpoint. Lastly, Rocco gave an update on the 3-duck regulation experiment. He indicated that things were going very well and that we set a record as far as registered 3 duck hunters which translates into 8% of all migratory bird certified hunters.

Following the presentation, Wildlife Director Kirschenmann and Andrew Norton, Wildlife Program Administrator, brought forth several proposals on the Waterfowl Hunting Seasons. GFP recommendations were shared to remove 20 counties from August Management Take and no other changes were recommended. After Commission discussion, the August Management Take unit change recommendation was proposed, in addition to a proposal to increase nonresident waterfowl licenses by 5% which would result in an increase of 315 licenses. Future changes to the Waterfowl Hunting Seasons will be discussed during the March Commission meeting.

11a. Duck Hunting Season
No action taken as there were no proposed changes from last year.

11b. August Management Take
Proposed changes from last year would be to remove Aurora, Beadle, Bon Homme, Brookings, Clay, Davison, Hanson, Hutchinson, Jerauld, Kingsbury, Lake, Lincoln, McCook, Miner, Minnehaha,

Moody, Sanborn, Turner, Union, and Yankton counties from the August Management Take Hunting Season unit.

MOTIONED BY BARLTING, SECONDED BY CULL TO APPROVE THE PROPOSED CHANGES, BRINGING FINALIZATION IN THE APRIL 2024 MEETING. The motion carried unanimously.

11c. Early Fall Canada Goose
No action taken as there were no proposed changes from last year.

11d. Goose Hunting Season
No action taken as there were no proposed changes from last year.

11e. Special Goose Hunting Season
No action taken as there were no proposed changes from last year.

11f. Spring Light Goose Hunting Season
No action taken as there were no proposed changes from last year.

11g. Sandhill Crane Hunting Season
No action taken as there were no proposed changes from last year.

11h. Tundra Swan Hunting Season
No action taken as there were no proposed changes from last year.

11i. Youth Waterfowl Hunting Season
No action taken as there were no proposed changes from last year.

11j. Nonresident Waterfowl Hunting Season
The department brought forth no recommended changes from last year. Discussion by Commissioners requested the Department add 5% more licenses to both the 3-day and 10-day nonresident waterfowl seasons.

A MOTION BY BIES, WITH A SECOND BY SPRING TO INCREASE THE NONRESIDENT WATERFOWL HUNTING SEASON WAS WITHDRAWN AFTER DISCUSSION THAT THE DEPARTMENT WOULD BRING BACK A PROPOSAL ON LATER IN THE MEETING FOR THE COMMISSION TO APPROVE.

MOTIONED BY BIES, SECONDED BY LOCKEN TO TABLE 11J TO LATER IN THE MEETING. The motion carried unanimously.

MOTIONED BY BIES, SECONDED BY WHITE TO APPROVE THE NEWLY AMENDED NONRESIDENT WATERFOWL PROPOSAL, WHICH INCREASED THE TOTAL NONRESIDENT WATERFOWL LICENSES BY 315 LICENSES, 210 FOR THE 10-DAY AND 105 FOR THE 3-DAY MAKING THE TOTAL ALLOCATED NONRESIDENT WATERFOWL HUNTING SEASON 6,615 LICENSES. Motion carried unanimously.

12. Elk Hunting Season Proposals [Action Item]

Wildlife Director Kirschenmann and Andrew Norton, Wildlife Program Administrator, brought forth several proposals on the Elk Hunting Seasons. Elk harvest and population survey information will be available during the March Commission meeting, so no license changes were recommended during the January Commission meeting. However, GPF recommendations to increase the maximum number of licenses that could be allocated to a season were proposed. These changes would allow the Commission flexibility in the future to take Administrative Action to modify the number of licenses in a unit, without having to go through

the Administrative Rule promulgation process. GFP will provide specific license number recommendations for 2024 and 2025 during the March Commission meeting.

12a. Custer State Park Early Elk Hunting Season
Proposed changes from last year were to increase the maximum number of licenses from ten to twenty "any elk" licenses and provide the option for up to twenty "antlerless elk" licenses. Actual license number recommendations for the next two years will be provided during the March commission meeting after population surveys have been completed.

MOTIONED BY WHITMYRE, SECONDED BY BARTLING TO APPROVE THE PROPOSED CHANGES AND BRING FINALIZATION TO THE APRIL 2024 MEETING. The motion carried unanimously.

12b. Custer State Park Elk Hunting Season
Proposed changes from last year were to increase the maximum number of licenses from twenty to thirty "any elk" licenses and the option to provide up to thirty "antlerless elk" licenses. Actual license number recommendations for the next two years will be provided during the March commission meeting after population surveys have been completed.

MOTIONED BY CULL, SECONDED BY BIES TO APPROVE THE PROPOSED CHANGES AND BRING FINALIZATION TO THE APRIL 2024 MEETING. The motion carried unanimously.

12c. Special Custer State Park Antlerless Elk Hunting Season
Proposed changes from last year were to specify the option to provide up to twenty "antlerless elk" licenses. Actual license number two years will be provided during the March commission meeting after population surveys have been completed.

MOTIONED BY WHITE, SECONDED BY LOCKEN TO APPROVE THE PROPOSED CHANGES AND BRING FINALIZATION TO THE APRIL 2024 MEETING. The motion carried unanimously.

12d. Archery (Black Hills) Elk Hunting Season
Proposed changes from last year were to (1) increase the maximum number of "any elk" licenses from 200 to 300 and "antlerless elk" licenses from 150 to 300. Actual license number recommendations for the next two years will be provided during the March commission meeting after population surveys have been completed. (2) Clean-up Administrative Rule to match unit boundary descriptions for Black Hills Archery Elk with Black Hills Firearm Elk.

MOTIONED BY SPRING, SECONDED BY BARTLING TO APPROVE THE PROPOSED CHANGES AND BRING FINALIZATION TO THE APRIL 2024 MEETING. The motion carried unanimously.

12e. Black Hills (Firearm) Elk Hunting Season
Proposed changes from last year were to Increase the maximum number of "any elk" licenses from 600 to 800 and "antlerless elk" licenses from 1,200 to 1,500. Actual license number recommendations for the next two years will be provided during the March commission meeting after population surveys have been completed.

MOTIONED BY CULL, SECONDED BY WHITMYRE TO APPROVE THE PROPOSED CHANGES AND BRING FINALIZATION TO THE APRIL 2024 MEETING. The motion carried unanimously.

12f. Prairie Elk Hunting Season

Proposed changes from last year were to Increase the maximum number of "any elk" licenses from 150 to 200 and "antlerless elk" licenses from 300 to 400. Actual license number recommendations

for the next two years will be provided during the March commission meeting after population surveys have been completed.

THE APPROVAL OF THE PROPOSED CHANGES AND BRING FINALIZATION TO THE APRIL 2024 MEETING CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

13. Lewis & Clark Marina Slip Fees [Action Item]

Sean Blanchette, Staff Specialist, Division of Parks and Recreation introduced Chris Donlin and Heath Denney of Lewis and Clark Marina. Blanchette provided an overview of the Lewis and Clark Marina operation and concession lease background information, which includes the requirement for Commission approval of any slip fee increases more than 3% starting in 2023. Blanchette explained that the slip fee increases are related to an ongoing marina renovation project which includes a complete replacement of the majority of the marina docks and land-based components at the expense of the Concessionaire. The rates subject to Commission approval were provided in the Commission Book. The final phase of dock replacements and fee increase proposal is expected in the 2024-2025 off season. Donlin provided the status of the project and explained several factors which have led to delays in implementation and resulting increased costs. Denney provided information on slip allocation processes and slip options for marina tenants if the price of their current slip became prohibitive.

MOTIONED BY BIES, SECONDED BY CULL TO APPROVE THE SLIP FEE INCREASES TO LEWIS & CLARK MARINA SLIPS. The motion carried unanimously.

14. End of Year Volunteer Report [Info Item]

Rachel Comes, Statewide Volunteer Coordinator, presented the Commissioners with an overview of the 2023 End of Year Volunteer Report.

15. Outreach and Event Attendance [Info Item]

April Larson, Marketing Coordinator, and Shala Larson, R3 and Relevancy Manager, reported on the 2023 educational programming and event participation. In 2023, South Dakota Game Fish and Parks held 3,663 programs with 97,439 participants. Of the reported programs, Parks staff hosted 1,941 events, reaching 63,983 participants. Educational and event programming is a great partnership between Wildlife and Park Divisions. Many outreach events are held in South Dakota State Parks because of the recreational opportunities and resources available. Both the Wildlife Division and the Parks Division continue to focus on recruitment by teaching skills to encourage new hunting, fishing, and park entrance license sales and increase park visitation. Environmental education, fishing, hunting skills, and outdoor skills have the highest percentage of programs.

16. 2024 Parks Theme Announcement [Info Item]

Nick Harrington, Communications Manager, and Rachel Comes, Statewide Parks Volunteer Coordinator, announced the Parks Theme for 2024 is ‘Reeling in the Memories.’

COMMISSIONER CULL RECEIVED AN EXCUSED ABSENSE ON DAY TWO.

17. Parks and Recreation Staff Division Awards [Info Item]

Parks & Recreation Director VanMeeteren provided the Commission with the 2023 Division Award winners who were celebrated at the Parks Division annual conference that was held virtually on Dec. 5, 2023. Award recipients were: Award of Appreciation (2) – Good Earth Park Manager Jim Henning and DCOS John Murphy; Seasonal of the Year - Tom Zerr of Indian Creek Recreation Area; Volunteers of the Year – John and Sue Hefner of Pease Creek Recreation Area; Teamwork Award (2) – Advance Training Project held at

Spring Creek Recreation Area – Shane Swenson, Bailey Biegler, Mark Crawford & Jason Cox and Fort George Aquatic Access Project – Chris Corder, Kyle Potter, Forrest Chapman, Ryan Raynor, Doug Boes, Katelyn Mann, Paul Sedljamer, Keith Garrigan and Carter Kniecht; Innovative Programming Award – Park Manager Brad Nelson – Rocky Point Recreation Area Wounded Warrior Archery Antelope Hunt; and the Distinguished Service Award – Regional Park Supervisor Willy Collignon.

18. End of the Year Parks Sales Report [Info Item]

Parks & Recreation Director VanMeeteren provided the Commission with an overview of how the Division ended the year with park revenue, visitation and camping units, highlighting some of the trends in these numbers over the past 20 years.

19. Youth Turkey Recruitment License [Action Item]

Wildlife Deputy Director Switzer reported to the Commission that there are ten total Youth Turkey Recruitment licenses available and no more than two can be issued to any organization. This year, there were four applicants for eight licenses. The applicants were Pheasants Forever, Delta Waterfowl Foundation, Midwest Chapter of Wild Sheep Foundation, and the Lake County Long Beards.

MOTIONED BY BIES, SECONDED BY BARLTING TO APPROVE TWO YOUTH TURKEY RECRUITMENT LICENSES EACH TO PHEASANTS FOREVER, DELTA WATERFOWL FOUNDATION, MIDWEST CHAPTER OF WILD SHEEP FOUNDATION, AND THE LAKE COUNTY LONG BEARDS. The motion carried unanimously.

20. Bighorn Sheep Auction License [Action Item]

Wildlife Deputy Director Switzer discussed the Bighorn Sheep Auction License will the Commissioners. He reported that anytime there is at least three bighorn sheep licenses available for the regular draw, a bighorn sheep license can be allocated an eligible organization as an auction license to promote the work the department does for bighorn sheep management. The department recommended the license be open to any bighorn sheep hunting unit. This year, the department received two applications from Midwest Chapter of Wildlife Sheep Foundation and the Iowa Foundation for North American Wild Sheep.

MOTIONED BY BIES, SECONDED BY LOCKEN TO APPROVE THE BIGHORN SHEEP AUCTION LICENSE FOR THE MIDWEST CHAPTER OF WILDLIFE SHEEP FOUNDATION. The motion carried unanimously.

21. Aquatic Management Priorities [Action Item]

Aquatics Section Chief John Lott presented the Aquatics Management Priorities to the Commission. He reported that 25 comments were received from the public in association with the call for public comment on aquatic management priorities for 2024. In addition to comments received by email, the Rooster Bait shop asked for comments through their Facebook site and written comments were gathered in the store. Upon review of comments, an additional priority of improving shore and ice fishing access for the Black Hills Fisheries Management Area was added to the list of priorities for Commission consideration. Additionally, statewide measurable outcomes for aquatic management efforts were included in the 2024 plan, including benchmarks for angler satisfaction, license sales, and angler days, implementation of the aquatic habitat stamp plan, and increasing fish rearing capacity to consistently meet area fisheries manager's stocking requests by 2029. The commission adopted aquatics management priorities, as modified.

MOTIONED BY BARTLING, SECONDED BY WHITMYRE TO ADOPT THE AQUATIC MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES. The motion carried unanimously.

22. 2023 Habitat Stamp Projects [Info Item]

Jason Jungwirth, Senior Wildlife Biologist and Ryan Wendinger, Habitat Program Administrator, discussed the 2023 Habitat Stamp Projects with the Commission. Terrestrial project accomplishments that were completed during 2023 using Habitat Stamp funds where shared. This included projects on GPAs such as 888 acres of grass seedings, 68 acres of trees planted, 257 acres of food plots, and 6 road access projects to name a few. Additionally, Habitat Stamp Funds were used for CREP and WIA payments. In 2023, approximately $800,000 were used to make annual payments on CREP contracts on 18,400 acres. Around $900,000 was issued under the WIA program for signing bonuses for new or extended long term access contracts. Over 58,000 acres of permanent habitat were encompassed with these contracts that have an average contract length of 8 years.

Aquatic project accomplishments that were completed during 2023 using Habitat Stamp funds were also shared. This included dam infrastructure maintenance that was done on 3 dams with a total of 24 of the 86 being worked on since 2020. There was also 7 boat ramp improvement and development projects. Twelve habitat and improvement projects were completed with 9 being fish habitat structure placements, an aeration project, a water quality project, and a fencing project. And there was 36 total access and trail improvement and development projects which consisted of 6 docks, 6 piers, 1 ADA ramp and 21 other access related projects.

A statewide map was shared showing Habitat Stamp project locations across the state for 2023 and a map showing all projects since inception. The Habitat Stamp Dashboard was also shared as an option for the public to view project information.

23. Hunting Season Report & License Sales Update [Info Item]

Wildlife Deputy Director Switzer gave a report on the hunting season and license sales.

24. Adjourn [Action Item]

Next meeting is scheduled for March 7-8, 2024, at the Missouri Avenue Event Center in Pierre, SD.

MOTIONED BY BIES, SECONDED BY LOCKEN TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 9:52 AM CST ON JANUARY 12, 2024. Motion carried unanimously.

Submitted respectfully,

Kevin Robling, Department Secretary

From: info@gfp.sd.us
To: Teglader@gmail.com
Cc: Kierl, Liz; Harrington, Nick
Subject: Petition for Rule Change Form
Date: Tuesday, February 13, 2024 4:20:00 PM

South Dakota - Game, Fish, and Parks

Petition for Rule Change

A new form was just submitted from the http://gfp.sd.gov/ website with the following information:

ID:	209
Petitioner Name:	Tate Glader
Address:	13111 Michelle Dr. Rapid City, SD 57702
Email:	Teglader@gmail.com
Phone:	605-381-6705
Rule Identification:	Deer draw
Decribe Change:	Revert back to unlimited first choice options for deer seasons.
Reason for Change:	Limiting the draw to 2 first choices was suppose to make it more likely for people to draw one of their choices. This has not worked.

GAME, FISH, AND PARKS COMMISSION ACTION
PROPOSAL

Uses of Parks and Public Lands
Chapter 41:03:01

Commission Meeting Dates:	**Proposal**	**March 7-8, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Public Hearing	**April 4, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Finalization	**April 4-5, 2024**	**Pierre**

SEASON INFORMATION

Duration of Recommendation: Beginning in 2024

Requirements and Restrictions:

1. An individual may hunt on walk-in areas without permission from the landowner or lessee, provided the person only travels on foot, unless otherwise authorized.

2. On public lands owned, leased, managed, or controlled by GFP:
    a. An individual is prohibited from constructing or using permanent tree stands, permanent blinds, and climbing devices.
    b. An individual's name, address, year and applicable big game license number must be legibly labeled on the exterior of unoccupied portable blinds, tree stands, and trail cameras.
    c. Bait stations are prohibited.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION

Recommended changes from last year:

1. On all private lands leased for public hunting access by GFP:
    a. Allow an individual to hunt without permission from the landowner or lessee.
        i. Previously this was only described on walk-in-areas.
    b. Specify the restriction to only active hunting on lands leased for public hunting by GFP.

2. In addition to all public lands owned, leased, managed, and controlled by GFP, on all private lands leased for public hunting access by GFP:
    a. Restrict an individual from constructing or using permanent tree stands, permanent blinds, and climbing devices.
        i. Previously this was only described on walk-in-areas.
    b. Require an individual's name and address, or customer identification number (instead of big game license number) to be legibly labeled on the exterior of unoccupied portable blinds, tree stands, and trail cameras.

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

Current rule only specifies use requirements on walk-in areas. The recommended edit to rule would expand this to all private lands leased by GFP for public hunting access. Because individuals may use tree stands, hunting blinds, or trail cameras for uses other than hunting big game, the recommendation is to allow a user to label these with either their name and address, name and phone number, or their GFP customer identification number. The final recommendation will specify that individuals need to obtain permission to use trail cameras on private land leased for hunting access by GFP.

DRAFT ADMINISTRATIVE RULE CHANGES

41:03:01:01.04. Prohibited use of ~~walk-in areas~~ private lands leased for public hunting access. No person may enter, use, or occupy private lands leased for public hunting access by the department ~~under the state walk-in area program~~ for any purpose other than hunting without the permission of the landowner or any lessee of the land other than the department. A person may enter, use, or occupy these private lands leased by the department ~~under the state walk-in area program~~ for the purposes of hunting, provided the person only travels on foot, unless otherwise authorized.

41:03:01:19. Limitation on tree stands, elevated platforms, and portable blinds. Construction or use of permanent tree stands, permanent blinds, and climbing devices is prohibited on public lands owned, leased, managed, or controlled by the department and on all private lands leased for public hunting access by the department. Portable tree stands, portable blinds, and climbing devices that do not utilize nails, wire, or bolts for attachment are allowed from August 1 through March 31. Portable blinds may be used during the spring turkey seasons established in chapters 41:06:13 and 41:06:15, by licensed spring turkey hunters. One screw-in "T" may be used to stabilize a tree stand. Removable screw-in steps may be used to access a tree stand. The name and address or phone number or ~~the year and current applicable big game license~~ name and customer identification number of the owner or user must be on the exterior of an unoccupied portable blind or tree stand and legible from the ground on a tree stand. Other elevated platform devices that are not attached to a tree must meet the requirements of this rule for permitted dates and for labeling if left overnight or unattended.

41:03:01:35. Bait stations prohibited. No person may establish, utilize, or maintain a bait station, as defined in § 41:06:04:03, on public lands owned, leased, managed, or controlled by the department and on all private lands leased for public hunting access by the department.

41:03:01:36. Limitation on trail cameras. Any trail camera placed on public lands owned, leased, managed, or controlled by the department may be attached to a tree, post, or other structure by utilizing no more than one nail, bolt, or screw. The name and address or phone number of the owner or ~~user or the year and current applicable big game license~~ name and customer identification number of the owner or user must be on the exterior of an unattended trail camera. Trail cameras are prohibited, without the permission of the landowner or lessee, on all private lands leased by the department. A trail camera is a remotely activated device set to capture photos, video, sound, or other evidence of activity while the user is absent from the location.

RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT CRITERIA

None

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, REACTIVATION (R3) CRITERIA

None

FISCAL IMPACT

None

APPROVE _____ MODIFY _____ REJECT _____ NO ACTION _____

GAME, FISH, AND PARKS COMMISSION ACTION
PROPOSAL

Time Restrictions for Use of State Park System and Public Lands
Chapter 41:03:01:01.01

Commission Meeting Dates:	**Proposal**	**March 7-8, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Public Hearing	**April 4, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Finalization	**April 4-5, 2024**	**Pierre**

INFORMATION

Duration of Proposal: Beginning in 2024

Requirements and Restrictions:

1. Only persons utilizing the state park system for lawful camping, hunting, fishing, trapping snowmobiling or boating may use these lands from 11:00 PM to 6:00 AM
2. Only persons utilizing a game production area for lawful fishing, hunting, trapping or boating activities may use these areas between the hours of 11:00 PM to 6:00 AM.
3. The Mickelson Trail may only be used 30 minutes before sunrise to 30 minutes after sunset.

COMMISSION PROPOSAL

Proposed changes from last year:

1. Provide a clarification that the Oahe Downstream Recreation Area and the West Shore Lake Access Area, and other areas north of Fort Pierre, observe Central Time zone;

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

There are several recreation areas and lakeside use areas that are technically located in the Mountain Time Zone but logistically they operate on the Central Time Zone as that is what the communities in which they are associated with operate. While this works in its current form, this has caused some concern with the enforcement of these rules. Law enforcement officers need to abide by the jurisdictional lines that are established to include the established time zones.

DRAFT ADMINISTRATIVE RULE CHANGES

41:03:01:01.01. Time restrictions for use of state park system and public lands. Only persons utilizing the state park system for lawful fishing, hunting, trapping, snowmobiling, boating, or camping may enter, use, or occupy the state park system from 11:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. Only persons who are engaged in lawful fishing, hunting, trapping, or boating activities may enter, use, or occupy public shooting areas, game production areas, wildlife refuges, and water access areas from 11:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. Oahe Downstream Recreation Area, West Shore Lakeside Use Area, Chantier Creek Lakeside Use Area, Minneconjou Lakeside Use Area and Foster Bay Lakeside Use Area north of Fort Pierre observe Central Time Zone; and The George Mickelson Trail may only be utilized for one half hour before sunrise to one half hour after sunset.

RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT CRITERIA

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

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, REACTIVATION (R3) CRITERIA

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

FISCAL IMPACT

None

GAME, FISH, AND PARKS COMMISSION ACTION PROPOSAL

Bighorn Sheep Hunting Season
Chapter 41:06:01; 41:06:07; 41:06:56

Commission Meeting Dates:	**Proposal**	**January 11-12, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Public Hearing	**April 4, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Finalization	**April 4-5, 2024**	**Pierre**

COMMISSION PROPOSAL

Duration of Proposal: 2024 and 2025 hunting seasons

Season Dates: September 1 – December 31

Open unit: Units 2, 4, and Custer State Park. See unit map for boundaries.

Licenses: License recommendations included in administrative action document

One of the licenses shall be an auction "ram bighorn sheep" license if a minimum of three total bighorn sheep licenses are allocated.

Requirements and Restrictions:

1. Except for the auction license, application for a license may be made by any resident hunter who has not been previously issued a bighorn sheep license in South Dakota.
2. Landowner - operator preference is not applicable to these licenses.
3. All licensees are required to attend an orientation meeting prior to the first day of hunting by the license holder at the regional office in Rapid City.
4. One bighorn sheep license may be allocated as an auction license if a minimum of three bighorn licenses are approved by the Commission. The Commission shall determine in which unit or units the auction license is valid.
5. All successful hunters must submit their bighorn sheep to a designated department representative for inspection and marking within 24 hours after the kill.

Proposed changes from last year:

1. Modify administrative rule to specify a maximum of 20 ram bighorn sheep licenses. License number and tag type recommendations for the next two years are included in the following administrative action item.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDED CHANGES FROM PROPOSAL

1. Remove BHS-BH1. Expand the unit boundary for BHS-BH4 to include the former boundaries of BHS-BH1 and those portions of Pennington County west of Interstate 90, Elk Vale Rd. and Highway 79. See Figure 2 on the following administrative action item for proposed unit boundaries.

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

The proposed maximum number of bighorn sheep licenses is established in administrative rule and the GFP Commission will propose and finalize the specific number of licenses, tag types, and allocations amongst hunting units via administrative action which is included in the following action item.

Minimum counts of bighorn sheep in the Rapid City herd were 45 in 2023, which is approaching the population count of 50 required for recommended ram harvest based on objective 3, strategy C in the bighorn sheep action plan. However, bighorn sheep in the Rapid City herd are mostly distributed on private land where hunters may be unable to obtain permission to pursue those animals. As a result, if bighorn sheep licenses were provided in the current BHS-BH1 (i.e., Rapid City unit), a hunter obtaining a once in a lifetime license may not have a realistic opportunity to harvest a bighorn sheep. As an alternative, based on the unit boundary modification, a hunter that is successful in obtaining a license for unit BHS-BH4 would be able to hunt sheep in the Hell Canyon herd and the Rapid City herd, if permission was obtained on private land or a ram moved onto a property that was open to public hunting.

DRAFT ADMINISTRATIVE RULE CHANGES

41:06:56:03. Number and type of licenses. No more than ~~11~~ 20 ram bighorn sheep licenses may be issued for the bighorn sheep hunting season. One bighorn sheep license may be issued for sale by auction pursuant to the procedures established in this chapter, valid for one ram bighorn sheep.

41:06:56:02. Open units. The following is a description of the open units:

~~(1) Unit BHS-BH1: that portion of Pennington County within an area beginning at Highway 385 and the Pennington County line, then south on Highway 385 to Sheridan Lake Road, then east on Sheridan Lake Road to Highway 79 in Rapid City, then north on Highway 79 to the Pennington County line;~~

~~(2)~~ (1) Unit BHS-BH2: that portion of Custer and Fall River counties within a line beginning at the junction of SD Hwy 16 and the WY state line, east on SD Hwy 16 to the intersection of SD Hwy 16 and Mann Rd (USFS Rd 270) then south along the Mann Rd to Pass Creek Rd (USFS Rd 272) then south on Pass Creek to Richardson Cutoff (USFS Rd 276) then east on Richardson Cutoff to Pleasant Valley Rd (USFS Rd 715) then south on Pleasant Valley Rd to Pilger Mountain Rd (USFS 317) then south on Pilger Mountain Rd to County Rd 15 then south on County Rd 15 to SD Hwy 18 then west on SD Hwy 18 to County Rd 16 then north on County Rd 16 to Dewey Rd (USFS Rd 769) then north and west on Dewey Rd to the Custer County line then west on the Custer county line to the WY state line then north on the WY state line to the point of origin;

~~(3)~~ (2) Unit BHS-BH3: that portion of Pennington County east of the Cheyenne River and north of Highway 44 and that portion of Jackson County north of the White River, excluding the Badlands National Park;

~~(4)~~ (3) Unit BHS-BH4: that portion of Custer and Pennington counties beginning at the junction of the Wyoming state line, Lawrence county line, and Pennington county line then east on Pennington county line to Interstate 90 then south on Interstate 90 to Elk Vale Road then south on Elk Vale Road ~~and Summit Ridge Road then north on Summit Ridge Road to Boles Canyon Road then north o Boles Canyon Road to Six Mile Road then east on Six Mile Road to Ditch Creek Road then south on Ditch Creek Road to the Custer/Pennington county line then east on the Custer/Pennington county line~~ to Highway 79 then south on Highway 79 to the Custer/Fall River county line then west on the Custer/Fall River county line to Pilger Mountain Road then north on Pilger Mountain Road to Pleasant Valley Road then north and east on Pleasant Valley Road to Richardson Cutoff then north on Richardson Cutoff to Pass Creek Road then west and north on Pass Creek Road to Mann Road then north on Mann Road to US Highway 16 then west on US Highway 16 to the Wyoming state line, then north on the Wyoming state line to the point of origin, excluding Jewel Cave National Monument, Wind Cave National Park, and Custer State Park; and

~~(5)~~ (4) Unit BHS-CSP: the fenced portion of Custer State Park.

RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT CRITERIA

None

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, REACTIVATION (R3) CRITERIA

1. Does the regulation or fee inhibit a user's ability to participate? No.
2. Does the regulation increase the opportunity for new and existing users? The regulation provides additional hunting opportunity.
3. How does the regulation impact the next generation of hunters, anglers, trappers and outdoor recreationists? NA
4. Does the regulation enhance the quality of life for current and future generations by getting families outdoors? The additional opportunity will provide more opportunity to harvest bighorn sheep for successful applicants.

FISCAL IMPACT

None

APPROVE _____ MODIFY _____ REJECT _____ NO ACTION _____

GAME, FISH, AND PARKS COMMISSION ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

Bighorn Sheep Hunting License Tables
Chapter 41:06:56

Commission Meeting Dates:	**Public Hearing**	**April 4, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Finalization	**April 4-5, 2024**	**Pierre**

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION

2024 and 2025 Ram Bighorn Sheep Licenses

Season	Unit	Ram Bighorn Sheep
Custer State Park (CBS)	CU1	4
Bighorn Sheep (BHS)	BH2	3
	BH3	0
	BH4	8
Auction	All	1
Total		**16**

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

The bighorn sheep herd in the Hell Canyon Unit (BHS-BH4; Figure 1) has increased from a minimum count of 69 in 2022 to a minimum count of 85 in 2023, and more ram hunting opportunity can be provided without adversely affecting the ram age-structure. Surveys in Custer State Park (CBS-CU1; Figure 1) also suggest the ram population could sustain additional harvest without significantly affecting age-structure. In addition, a current recommendation is to absorb the current Rapid City unit (not displayed on Figure 1) into the Hell Canyon unit (BHS-BH4; Figure 2).

Table 1. Minimum bighorn sheep counts, previous license allocation (2022 and 2023) and proposed license allocation (2024 and 2025) by bighorn sheep hunting unit.

Season	Unit	Herd	2023 Min. Count	Licenses	
				2022-2023	2024-2025
Custer State Park (CBS)	CU1	CSP	61	3	4
Bighorn Sheep (BHS)	BH1	Rapid City	45	0	Combined with BH4
	BH2	Elk Mountain	58	3	3
	BH3	Badlands	66	0	0
	BH4	Hell Canyon	85	4	8
Not Described in Admin. Rule		Deadwood	26	NA	NA
Auction	All	All	NA	1	1
Total			**341**	**11**	**16**

Figure 1. Custer State Park (CBS-CU1) and Black Hills bighorn sheep units (BHS-BH2, BHS-BH3, BHS-BH4).

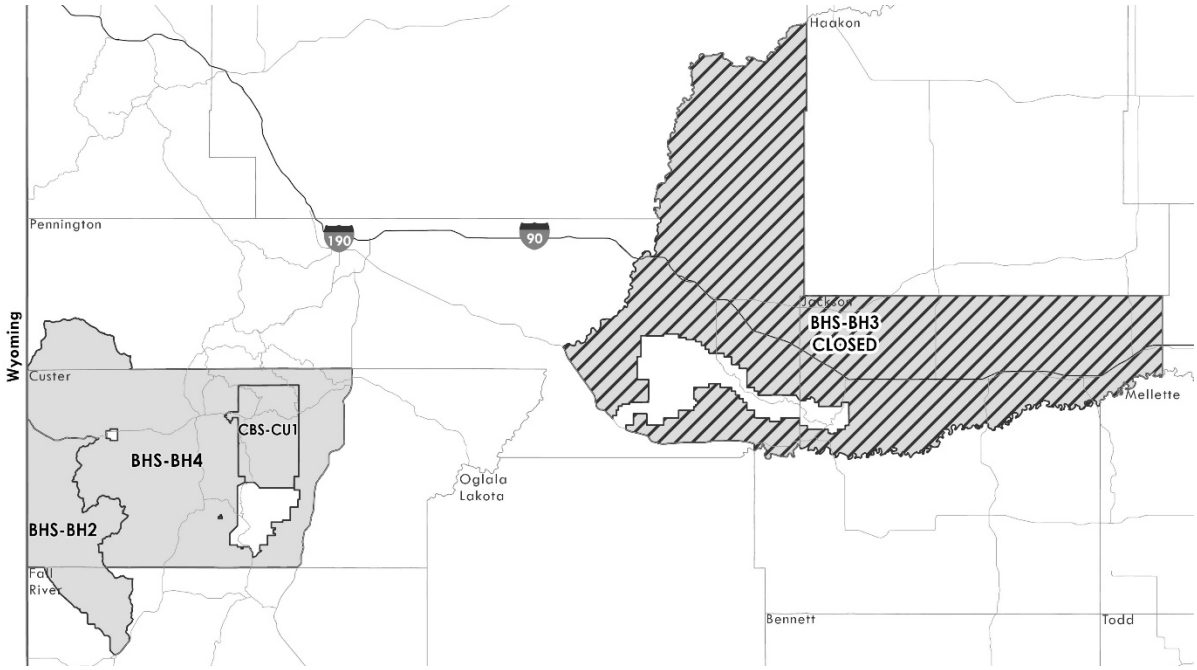
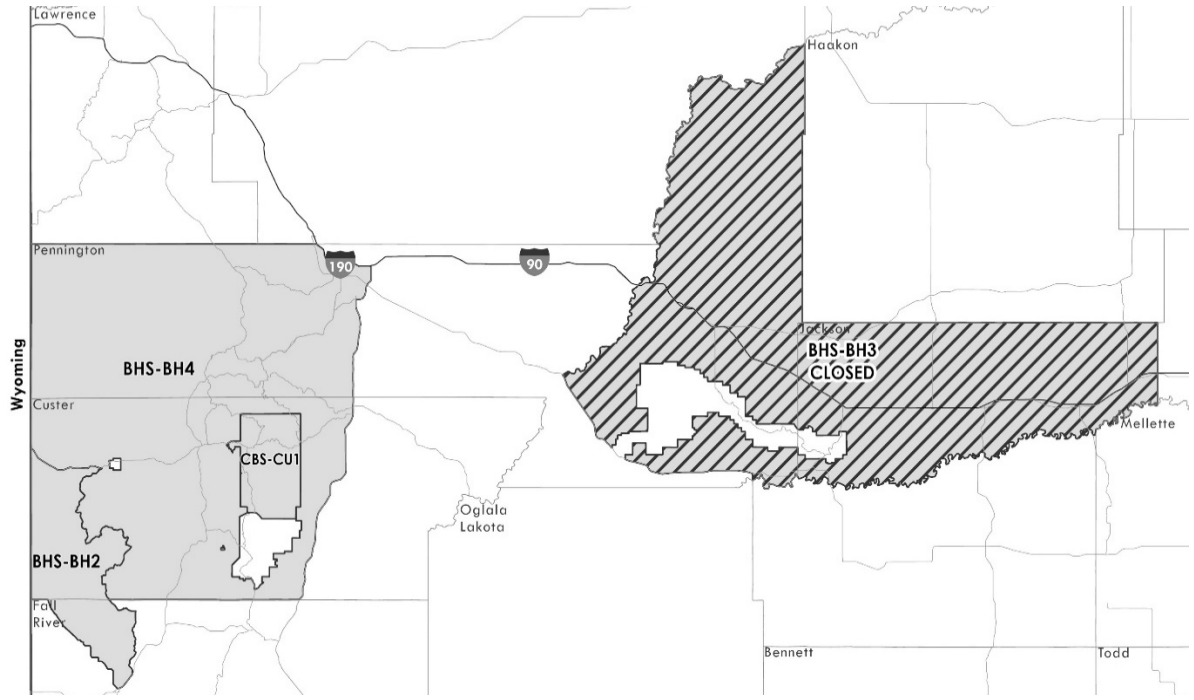


Figure 2. Custer State Park (CBS-CU1), Black Hills bighorn sheep units (BHS-BH2, BHS-BH3), and recommended change to Black Hills bighorn sheep unit (BHS-BH4).



APPROVE _____	MODIFY _____	REJECT _____	NO ACTION _____

GAME, FISH, AND PARKS COMMISSION ACTION
PROPOSAL

Custer State Park Bison
Chapter 41:06:07, 41:06:42, and 41:06:60

Commission Meeting Dates:	**Proposal**	**March 7-8, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Public Hearing	**May 4, 2024**	**Custer State Park**
	Finalization	**May 4-5, 2024**	**Custer State Park**

SEASON INFORMATION

Duration of Recommendation: 2024/2025 and 2025/2026 hunting seasons.

Season Dates:

Trophy: a licensee is restricted to three consecutive days for the hunt*
- November 18, 2024 – January 17, 2025
- November 17, 2025 – January 16, 2026

Non-trophy: a licensee is restricted to one day for the hunt*
- October 7 – November 15, 2024
- October 6 – November 14, 2025

*all licensees shall be accompanied by an authorized Custer State Park official while hunting.

Open Areas: Custer State Park.

Licenses:

Eight trophy bull licenses available by lottery.
- Two licenses allocated to residents in a first draw.

One trophy bull license available by raffle.
- § 41:06:62:03

Fifteen non-trophy bull licenses available by lottery.
- Seven allocated to residents in a first draw.

Zero non-trophy cow licenses.

Requirements and Restrictions:

1. Open to residents and nonresidents.

2. No person may hunt bison within 200 yards of any public access road or building in Custer State Park.

3. Bison may only be hunted with a weapon which is at least .270 caliber and which produces at least 2,200 foot-pounds of muzzle energy.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION

Recommended changes from last year:

1. Clean-up administrative rule to remove “bull” and edit “nontrophy” for rule consistency when referring to non-trophy bison harvest in § 41:06:07:01. Non-trophy cow licenses are currently set at zero and this is specified in Custer State Park Non-trophy Bison Harvest, Number and type of licenses § 41:06:60:02

2. Allow the use of archery equipment during the Custer State Park trophy and non-trophy bison harvest season.

3. Decrease the allowable hunting days for trophy bison from 3-2. Past hunters typically fill their tag within 2 days. The change will allow increased opportunity for scheduling of hunts.

4. Increase the number of trophy bison licenses available by random lottery drawing from 8 – 10. This would result in a total of 11 trophy bison licenses, including the 1 license available through the Hunt for Habitat raffle drawing.

5. Increase the number of non-trophy bison licenses from 15-20.

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

Archery equipment has not been allowed during the Custer State Park trophy bison bull harvest season. However, there is a desire to use archery equipment to harvest a bison during the Custer State Park bison harvest season.

Increase the trophy and nontrophy bull licenses to allow for additional hunting opportunities.

DRAFT ADMINISTRATIVE RULE CHANGES

41:06:07:01. Eligibility. Except for the Custer State Park trophy bison bull harvest and ~~nontrophy~~ non-trophy bison ~~bull~~ harvest only residents of the state may apply for special Custer State Park hunting seasons.

41:06:07:03. Minimum ~~gun~~ weapon size for bison. Bison may only be hunted with a weapon which is at least .270 caliber and which produces at least 2,200 foot-pounds of muzzle energy. However, during the Custer State Park bison harvest season, § 41:06:60, bison may also be harvested with archery equipment that measures at least 40 pounds of pull.

41:06:42:01. Season established**.** The trophy bull bison harvest in Custer State Park is open for 61 days beginning the third Monday in November. A licensee is restricted to ~~three~~ two consecutive days for the hunt.

41:06:42:02. Number of licenses. ~~Eight~~ Eleven "trophy bull bison" licenses are available by lottery, with two "trophy bull bison" licenses allocated to residents in a first draw.

41:06:60:02. Number and type of licenses. ~~Fifteen~~ Twenty non-trophy bull bison licenses are available by lottery, with seven non-trophy bull bison licenses allocated to residents in a first draw. No cow bison licenses may be issued.

RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT CRITERIA

None

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, REACTIVATION (R3) CRITERIA

1. Does the regulation or fee inhibit a user's ability to participate? There will be more opportunity for hunting.
2. Does the regulation increase the opportunity for new and existing users? There will be more hunting opportunities.

3. How does the regulation impact the next generation of hunters, anglers, trappers, and outdoor recreationists? The regulation is intended to increase the opportunity to harvest a bison.
4. Does the regulation enhance the quality of life for current and future generations by getting families outdoors? NA

FISCAL IMPACT

The sale of 2 additional trophy bull licenses and 5 additional non-trophy bull licenses will increase revenue from license sales.

APPROVE _____ MODIFY _____ REJECT _____ NO ACTION _____

GAME, FISH, AND PARKS COMMISSION ACTION
PROPOSAL

Custer State Park Coyote Hunting Season
Chapter 41:06:04, 41:06:07 and 41:06:37

Commission Meeting Dates:	**Proposal**	**March 7-8, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Public Hearing	**May 2, 2024**	**Custer State Park**
	Finalization	**May 2-3, 2024**	**Custer State Park**

SEASON INFORMATION

Duration of Recommendation: Beginning December 26, 2024

Season Dates: December 26 – April 30
From one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset

Open Areas: Custer State Park.

Requirements and Restrictions:

1. Open to residents only with one of the following licenses: predator/varmint, furbearer, or any resident hunting license.
    a. No license is required for youth under the age of 18.

2. No person may hunt coyotes within 200 yards of any public access road or building in Custer State Park.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION

Recommended changes from last year:

1. Extend the season to start November 1 and continue through April 30.

2. Remove closure of season from one-half hour after sunset to one-half hour before sunrise and allow coyote hunting throughout the day and night.
    a. Based on SD statute § 41-8-17, from January 1 to August 31, a person may use night vision equipment, but not artificial light, to take coyotes on public land between sunset and sunrise.
    b. From November 1 to December 31, a person may only use natural light to take coyote, and neither night vision nor artificial light are permitted.

3. Specify the number and type of licenses required.

4. Repeal § 41:06:37:04 because the hunting area restrictions are redundant to restrictions described in Custer State Park restrictions § 41:06:07:10.

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

A primary objective in Custer State Park is to provide maximum wildlife viewing and hunting opportunities. Coyote predation may adversely affect some prey populations and limit wildlife viewing and hunting opportunities. This recommendation will allow additional coyote hunting opportunity in Custer State Park during the deer hunting season in November, the entire month of December, and allow hunting of coyotes at night. Removal of additional coyotes may result in higher survival and subsequently larger populations of prey species including white-tailed and mule deer, elk, turkey, bighorn sheep, and antelope.

DRAFT ADMINISTRATIVE RULE CHANGES

41:06:37:01. Season established. The coyote hunting season in Custer State Park is Unit CUC-CU1 and is open ~~from one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset each day~~ from ~~December 26~~ November 1 through April 30.

~~41:06:37:04. Open area -- Exceptions. The fenced area of the park is open to coyote hunting in this season. However, the roads and rights-of-way of U.S. Highway 16A are closed to hunting.~~

RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT CRITERIA

None

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, REACTIVATION (R3) CRITERIA

1. Does the regulation or fee inhibit a user's ability to participate? No.
2. Does the regulation increase the opportunity for new and existing users? The regulation provides additional hunting opportunity.
3. How does the regulation impact the next generation of hunters, anglers, trappers and outdoor recreationists? NA
4. Does the regulation enhance the quality of life for current and future generations by getting families outdoors? The additional opportunity may encourage more people to go outdoors and hunt coyotes in Custer State Park.

FISCAL IMPACT

None

APPROVE _____ MODIFY _____ REJECT _____ NO ACTION _____

GAME, FISH, AND PARKS COMMISSION ACTION
PROPOSAL

Grouse Hunting Season
Chapter 41:06:09

Commission Meeting Dates:	**Proposal**	**March 7-8, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Public Hearing	**May 2, 2024**	**Custer State Park**
	Finalization	**May 2-3, 2024**	**Custer State Park**

SEASON INFORMATION

Duration of Recommendation: 2024, 2025, and 2026 hunting seasons

Season Dates and Open Areas: Statewide
September 21, 2024 – January 5, 2025
September 20, 2025 – January 4, 2026
September 19, 2026 – January 3, 2027

Daily Limit: 3 grouse

Possession Limit: 15 grouse

Requirements and Restrictions:

1. Shooting hours are sunrise to sunset.
2. “Grouse” includes sharp-tailed grouse, ruffed grouse, and prairie chicken.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION

Recommended changes from last year:

1. Modify the season end date to align with the end date for the pheasant season of January 31. This will result in an approximately 4-week extension to the season.

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

The proposed change will simplify season dates and provide consistency among grouse, partridge, quail, and pheasant season end dates. The Department recommends extending the grouse hunting season end date to January 31. With the pheasant hunting season end date extended to January 31 during the 2020 hunting season, hunting opportunity for grouse could also be extended without having any negative impact on the population. South Dakota is one of just a few other states that offer an opportunity to harvest ring-necked pheasant, sharp-tailed grouse, greater prairie-chicken, partridge, and quail. Limited harvest is expected to occur into January, and it would provide an opportunity for pheasant hunters to opportunistically harvest grouse.

Comparison of the 2013 - 2022 prairie grouse season statistics

	Residents					Nonresidents				
Year	Hunters	Harvest	Ave Day Hunted	Ave Bag	Satis-faction	Hunters	Harvest	Ave Day Hunted	Ave Bag	Satis-faction
2013	7,149	19,858	4.28	2.76	4.11	4,523	7,840	3.87	1.73	4.95
2014	6,503	25,847	4.55	4.01	4.85	4,254	9,943	3.99	2.31	5.52
2015	7,866	34,506	4.72	4.40	4.98	5,032	15,388	4.05	3.08	5.49
2016	7,199	31,611	4.88	4.40	4.72	5,203	11,294	4.04	2.18	5.43
2017	5,703	15,863	4.57	2.80	4.23	3,645	6,290	3.81	1.73	5.06
2018	5,868	16,431	4.36	2.83	4.64	3,979	7,429	4.08	1.87	5.38
2019	5,583	18,601	4.45	3.33	4.67	4,637	11,452	3.74	2.47	5.28
2020	10,487	48,947	5.14	4.78	5.06	6,389	18,314	4.33	2.88	5.75
2021	8,680	36,583	5.55	4.28	4.75	6,597	16,636	4.22	2.53	5.38
2022	9,149	40,263	5.53	4.46	5.09	7,616	23,354	3.97	3.10	5.85

DRAFT ADMINISTRATIVE RULE CHANGES

41:06:09:01. Grouse hunting season established. The grouse hunting season is open statewide from sunrise to sunset each day beginning on the third Saturday of September. The season remains open through the ~~first Sunday~~ end of January. "Grouse" includes sharptail grouse, ruffed grouse, and prairie chicken.

RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT CRITERIA

None

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, REACTIVATION (R3) CRITERIA

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

FISCAL IMPACT

None

APPROVE _____ MODIFY _____ REJECT _____ NO ACTION _____

GAME, FISH, AND PARKS COMMISSION ACTION
PROPOSAL

Pheasant Hunting Season
Chapter 41:06:08, 41:06:54, 41:06:55, 41:06:58

Commission Meeting Dates:	**Proposal**	**March 7-8, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Public Hearing	**May 2, 2024**	**Custer State Park**
	Finalization	**May 2-3, 2024**	**Custer State Park**

SEASON INFORMATION

Duration of Recommendation: 2024, 2025, and 2026 hunting seasons

Season Dates and Open Areas:

Unit 1 (statewide except for those areas described in Units 2 and 3)
- October 19, 2024 – January 31, 2025
- October 18, 2025 – January 31, 2026
- October 17, 2026 – January 31, 2027

Unit 2 (Renzienhausen Game Production Area and State Game Bird Refuge, Gerken State Game Bird Refuge, and White Lake State Game Bird Refuge)
- December 1, 2024 – January 31, 2025
- December 1, 2025 – January 31, 2026
- December 1, 2026 – January 31, 2027

Unit 3 (Sand Lake National Wildlife Refuge)
- December 9, 2024 – January 31, 2025
- December 8, 2025 – January 31, 2026
- December 14, 2026 – January 31, 2027

Resident Early Pheasant (statewide; public accessible land only):
- October 12 – 14, 2024
- October 11 – 13, 2025
- October 10 – 12, 2026

Youth Pheasant (statewide):
- September 28 – October 6, 2024
- September 27 – October 5, 2025
- September 26 – October 4, 2026

Disabled Veteran Pheasant (statewide; through special application on private land only):
- September 1, 2024 – January 31, 2025
- September 1, 2025 – January 31, 2026
- September 1, 2026 – January 31, 2027

Daily Limit: 3 male pheasants

Possession Limit: 15 male pheasants

Requirements and Restrictions:

1. Shooting hours are: 10:00 a.m. to sunset during Unit 1, 2 and 3, Youth season, and Resident Early season; sunrise to sunset before Unit 1 pheasant season and 10:00 a.m. to sunset during Unit 1 pheasant season for Disabled Veteran season; and sunrise to sunset on Private Shooting Preserves.

2. A person who has not reached the age 18 is eligible for the youth pheasant season.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION

Recommended changes from last year: None

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

Comparison of the 2013 - 2022 Pheasant season statistics

	Resident Hunters					Nonresident Hunters				
Year	Number Hunters	Harvest	Ave Day Hunted	Ave Bag	Satis-faction	Number Hunters	Harvest	Ave Day Hunted	Ave Bag	Satis-faction
2013	57,647	368,567	6.33	7.15	4.11	74,413	561,445	3.99	7.74	4.95
2014	61,776	504,144	6.31	8.32	4.85	79,195	695,660	4.16	8.79	5.52
2015	65,135	517,942	6.17	8.06	4.98	84,901	737,936	4.15	8.71	5.49
2016	61,746	478,099	6.24	7.86	4.72	81,141	692,497	4.14	8.57	5.43
2017	52,538	326,936	6.08	6.30	4.23	67,232	501,773	3.96	7.47	5.06
2018	53,577	392,020	6.26	7.38	4.64	69,018	558,863	4.06	8.11	5.38
2019	47,403	354,742	6.17	7.48	4.67	63,801	474,754	4.04	7.44	5.28
2020	59,042	518,288	8.09	9.28	5.06	62,289	560,618	4.47	9.00	5.75
2021	54,411	473,728	7.62	8.71	4.75	75,606	593,695	4.30	7.85	5.38
2022	53,846	510,957	7.75	9.49	5.09	73,887	647,759	4.25	8.77	5.85

DRAFT ADMINISTRATIVE RULE CHANGES

None

RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT CRITERIA

None

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, REACTIVATION (R3) CRITERIA

None

FISCAL IMPACT

None

APPROVE _____ MODIFY _____ REJECT _____ NO ACTION _____

GAME, FISH, AND PARKS COMMISSION ACTION
PROPOSAL

Partridge Hunting Season
Chapter 41:06:12

Commission Meeting Dates:	**Proposal**	**March 7-8, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Public Hearing	**May 2, 2024**	**Custer State Park**
	Finalization	**May 2-3, 2024**	**Custer State Park**

SEASON INFORMATION

Duration of Recommendation: 2024, 2025, and 2026 hunting seasons

Season Dates and Open Areas: Statewide
September 21, 2024 – January 5, 2025
September 20, 2025 – January 4, 2026
September 19, 2026 – January 3, 2027

Daily Limit: 5 partridge

Possession Limit: 15 partridge

Requirements and Restrictions:

1. Shooting hours are sunrise to sunset.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION

Recommended changes from last year:

1. Modify the season end date to align with the end date for the pheasant season of January 31. This will result in an approximately 4-week extension to the season.

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

The proposed change will simplify season dates and provide consistency among grouse, partridge, quail, and pheasant season end dates. The Department recommends extending the partridge hunting season end date to January 31. With the pheasant hunting season end date extended to January 31 during the 2020 hunting season, hunting opportunity for partridge could also be extended without having any negative impact on the population. South Dakota is one of just a few other states that offer an opportunity to harvest ring-necked pheasant, sharp-tailed grouse, greater prairie-chicken, partridge, and quail. Limited harvest is expected to occur into January, and it would provide an opportunity for pheasant hunters to opportunistically harvest partridge.

Comparison of the 2013 - 2022 partridge harvests

	Residents				Nonresidents			
Year	Hunters	Harvest	Ave Days Hunted	Ave Bag	Hunters	Harvest	Ave Days Hunted	Ave Bag
2013	2,666	2,990	7.09	1.13	1,926	2,761	4.23	1.43
2014	2,355	5,942	6.27	2.43	1,985	3,609	4.13	1.82
2015	3,189	5,840	5.63	1.85	2,133	5,019	4.05	3.08
2016	2,516	7,053	5.87	2.73	2,204	3,272	4.21	1.48
2017	2,005	2,496	5.44	1.24	1,682	2,224	3.93	1.32
2018	1,672	1,223	4.82	0.75	1,904	3,900	4.38	2.05
2019	1,850	1,703	5.48	1.04	1,565	2,478	4.34	1.58
2020	2,432	3,505	6.85	1.46	1,806	2,177	4.32	1.21
2021	1,851	2,766	4.78	1.50	2,398	3,448	4.47	1.44
2022	2,236	4,362	6.70	1.99	2,318	4,379	4.15	1.94

DRAFT ADMINISTRATIVE RULE CHANGES

41:06:12:01. Partridge hunting season established -- Open area and dates. The partridge hunting season is open statewide from sunrise to sunset each day beginning on the third Saturday of September and remains open through the ~~first Sunday~~ end of January.

RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT CRITERIA

None

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, REACTIVATION (R3) CRITERIA

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

FISCAL IMPACT

None

APPROVE _____ MODIFY _____ REJECT _____ NO ACTION _____

GAME, FISH, AND PARKS COMMISSION ACTION
PROPOSAL

Quail Hunting Season
Chapter 41:06:11

Commission Meeting Dates:	**Proposal**	**March 7-8, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Public Hearing	**May 2, 2024**	**Custer State Park**
	Finalization	**May 2-3, 2024**	**Custer State Park**

SEASON INFORMATION

Duration of Recommendation: 2024, 2025, and 2026 hunting seasons

Season Dates and Open Areas: Statewide
October 19, 2024 – January 5, 2025
October 18, 2025 – January 4, 2026
October 17, 2026 – January 3, 2027

Daily Limit: 5 quail

Possession Limit: 15 quail

Requirements and Restrictions:

1. Shooting hours are sunrise to sunset.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION

Recommended changes from last year:

1. Modify the season end date to align with the end date for the pheasant season of January 31. This will result in an approximately 4-week extension to the season.

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

The proposed change will simplify season dates and provide consistency among grouse, partridge, quail, and pheasant season end dates. The Department recommends extending the quail hunting season end date to January 31. With the pheasant hunting season end date extended to January 31 during the 2020 hunting season, hunting opportunity for quail could also be extended without having any negative impact on the population. South Dakota is one of just a few other states that offer an opportunity to harvest ring-necked pheasant, sharp-tailed grouse, greater prairie-chicken, partridge, and quail. Limited harvest is expected to occur into January, and it would provide an opportunity for pheasant hunters to opportunistically harvest quail.

DRAFT ADMINISTRATIVE RULE CHANGES

41:06:11:01. Quail hunting season established. The quail hunting season is open statewide from sunrise to sunset each day beginning on the third Saturday of October and remains open through the ~~first Sunday~~ end of January.

RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT CRITERIA

None

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, REACTIVATION (R3) CRITERIA

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

FISCAL IMPACT

None

APPROVE _____ MODIFY _____ REJECT _____ NO ACTION _____

GAME, FISH, AND PARKS COMMISSION ACTION
PROPOSAL

Cottontail Rabbit Hunting Season
Chapter 41:06:34

Commission Meeting Dates:	**Proposal**	**March 7-8, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Public Hearing	**May 2, 2024**	**Custer State Park**
	Finalization	**May 2-3, 2024**	**Custer State Park**

SEASON INFORMATION

Duration of Recommendation: 2024, 2025, and 2026 hunting seasons

Season Dates and Open Areas: Statewide; September 1 – February 28.

Daily Limit: 10 cottontail rabbits

Possession Limit: 30 cottontail rabbits

Requirements and Restrictions:

1. Shooting hours are sunrise to sunset.
2. A landowner and any person with permission may take cottontail rabbits on the landowner's property year-round without restriction.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION

Recommended changes from last year: None

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

Comparison of the 2013 - 2022 cottontail and squirrel harvests

	Cottontails				*Squirrels*			
	Hunters		*Harvest*		*Hunters*		*Harvest*	
Year	*Resident*	*Nonres*	*Resident*	*Nonres*	*Resident*	*Nonres*	*Resident*	*Nonres*
2013	4,199	516	21,682	846	2,911	116	10,962	61
2014	5,366	754	28,276	1,591	2,552	150	9,587	241
2015	5,779	1,020	37,407	2,397	2,870	171	13,311	180
2016	5,584	754	35,649	2,224	2,786	181	11,614	262
2017	4,628	607	22,711	1,561	2,571	87	9,850	260
2018	4,341	475	19,386	937	2,302	141	8,241	293
2019	3,563	437	19,329	604	2,542	87	12,077	116
2020	4,871	597	27,026	928	3,174	119	12,757	239
2021	4,063	754	19,385	754	2,248	74	8,014	59
2022	5,333	796	33,910	1,943	2,466	80	9,949	48

Survey design changed in 2010 and 2014 so results may not be directly comparable to previous years.

DRAFT ADMINISTRATIVE RULE CHANGES

None

RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT CRITERIA

None

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, REACTIVATION (R3) CRITERIA

None

FISCAL IMPACT

None

APPROVE _____ MODIFY _____ REJECT _____ NO ACTION _____

GAME, FISH, AND PARKS COMMISSION ACTION
PROPOSAL

Tree Squirrel Hunting Season
Chapter 41:06:35

Commission Meeting Dates:	**Proposal**	**March 7-8, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Public Hearing	**May 2, 2024**	**Custer State Park**
	Finalization	**May 2-3, 2024**	**Custer State Park**

SEASON INFORMATION

Duration of Recommendation: 2024, 2025, and 2026 hunting seasons

Season Dates and Open Area: Statewide; September 1 – February 28.

Limit: 5 tree squirrel

Possession Limit: 15 tree squirrels

Requirements and Restrictions:

1. Shooting hours are sunrise to sunset.
2. Only red squirrel, gray squirrel, and fox squirrel may be hunted.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION

Recommended changes from last year: None

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

Comparison of the 2013 - 2022 cottontail and squirrel harvests

	Cottontails				Squirrels			
	Hunters		Harvest		Hunters		Harvest	
Year	Resident	Nonres	Resident	Nonres	Resident	Nonres	Resident	Nonres
2013	4,199	516	21,682	846	2,911	116	10,962	61
2014	5,366	754	28,276	1,591	2,552	150	9,587	241
2015	5,779	1,020	37,407	2,397	2,870	171	13,311	180
2016	5,584	754	35,649	2,224	2,786	181	11,614	262
2017	4,628	607	22,711	1,561	2,571	87	9,850	260
2018	4,341	475	19,386	937	2,302	141	8,241	293
2019	3,563	437	19,329	604	2,542	87	12,077	116
2020	4,871	597	27,026	928	3,174	119	12,757	239
2021	4,063	754	19,385	754	2,248	74	8,014	59
2022	5,333	796	33,910	1,943	2,466	80	9,949	48

Survey design changed in 2010 and 2014 so results may not be directly comparable to previous years.

DRAFT ADMINISTRATIVE RULE CHANGES

None

RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT CRITERIA

None

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, REACTIVATION (R3) CRITERIA

None

FISCAL IMPACT

None

APPROVE _____ MODIFY _____ REJECT _____ NO ACTION _____

GAME, FISH, AND PARKS COMMISSION ACTION
PROPOSAL

Crow Hunting Season
Chapter 41:06:39

Commission Meeting Dates:	**Proposal**	**March 7-8, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Public Hearing	**May 2, 2024**	**Custer State Park**
	Finalization	**May 2-3, 2024**	**Custer State Park**

SEASON INFORMATION

Duration of Recommendation: 2024, 2025, and 2026 hunting seasons

Season Dates and Open Area: Statewide
1st interval: September 1 – October 31.
2nd interval: March 1 – April 30.

Daily and Possession Limit: Unlimited

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION

Recommended changes from last year: None

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

None

DRAFT ADMINISTRATIVE RULE CHANGES

None

RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT CRITERIA

None

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, REACTIVATION (R3) CRITERIA

None

FISCAL IMPACT

None

APPROVE _____ MODIFY _____ REJECT _____ NO ACTION _____

GAME, FISH, AND PARKS COMMISSION ACTION
PROPOSAL

Snipe Hunting Season
Chapter 41:06:17

Commission Meeting Dates:	**Proposal**	**March 7-8, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Public Hearing	**May 2, 2024**	**Custer State Park**
	Finalization	**May 2-3, 2024**	**Custer State Park**

SEASON INFORMATION

Duration of Recommendation: 2024, 2025, and 2026 hunting seasons

Season Dates and Open Area: Statewide; September 1 – October 31

Daily Limit: 5 snipe

Possession Limit: 15 snipe

Requirements and Restrictions:

1. Shooting hours are sunrise to sunset.
2. Nontoxic shot rules apply to snipe hunting.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION

Recommended changes from last year:

1. Remove the word “common” before snipe to allow harvest of all snipe species.

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

The common snipe is generally found in Europe and the Wilson’s snipe is generally found in North America. The snipe season is not intended to differentiate among species of snipe.

DRAFT ADMINISTRATIVE RULE CHANGES

CHAPTER 41:06:17

~~COMMON~~ SNIPE HUNTING SEASON

41:06:17:01. Snipe hunting season established. The ~~common~~ snipe hunting season is open statewide from sunrise to sunset each day from September 1 through October 31.

41:06:17:03. Daily bag limit. The daily bag limit is 5 ~~common~~ snipe.

41:06:17:04. Possession limit. A person may have in possession at one time no more than 15 ~~common~~ snipe taken according to the daily limit.

RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT CRITERIA

None

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, REACTIVATION (R3) CRITERIA

None

FISCAL IMPACT

None

APPROVE _____ MODIFY _____ REJECT _____ NO ACTION _____

GAME, FISH, AND PARKS COMMISSION ACTION
PROPOSAL

Mourning Dove Hunting Season
Chapter 41:06:40

Commission Meeting Dates:	**Proposal**	**March 7-8, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Public Hearing	**May 2, 2024**	**Custer State Park**
	Finalization	**May 2-3, 2024**	**Custer State Park**

SEASON INFORMATION

Duration of Recommendation: 2024, 2025, and 2026 hunting seasons

Season Dates and Open Areas: Statewide; September 1 – November 9

Daily Limit: 15 mourning doves

Possession Limit: 45 mourning doves

Requirements and Restrictions:

1. Shooting hours are sunrise to sunset.
2. Doves may only be shot in flight.
3. All state parks and state recreation areas are closed to dove hunting except Angostura State Recreation Area excluding that portion of the area lying east of the dam, Shadehill State Recreation Area, the portions of Oahe Downstream Recreation Area located west of State Highway 1806, and any portions of a state park or recreation area posted as open.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION

Recommended changes from last year: None

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

Summary comparison of the 2013 - 2022 mourning dove seasons

	Residents					*Nonresidents*				
Year	*Number Hunters*	*Harvest*	*Ave Day Hunted*	*Ave Bag*	*Satis-faction*	*Number Hunters*	*Harvest*	*Ave Day Hunted*	*Ave Bag*	*Satis-faction*
2013	6,752	113,367	4.56	16.79	5.06	210	2,061	2.67	9.80	5.27
2014	8,345	167,407	4.67	20.06	5.05	316	3,991	2.95	12.62	5.71
2015	7,255	127,217	4.66	17.53	5.07	396	7,705	3.29	19.46	5.83
2016	7,131	122,876	4.19	17.23	4.89	318	3,601	2.79	11.32	5.59
2017	6,828	124,052	4.11	18.17	5.12	275	3,463	3.79	12.58	4.63
2018	6,531	120,835	4.16	18.50	5.12	275	3,571	3.22	13.00	5.72
2019	6,003	102,771	3.92	17.12	5.14	290	3,827	3.15	13.20	4.85
2020	6,844	122,464	4.45	17.89	5.21	416	7,158	3.55	17.23	6.06
2021	6,298	107,736	4.04	17.11	5.15	393	6,923	3.35	17.62	5.38
2022	6,855	141,349	4.39	20.62	5.29	506	7,652	3.32	15.13	6.35

DRAFT ADMINISTRATIVE RULE CHANGES

None

RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT CRITERIA

None

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, REACTIVATION (R3) CRITERIA

None

FISCAL IMPACT

None

APPROVE _____ MODIFY _____ REJECT _____ NO ACTION _____

GAME, FISH, AND PARKS COMMISSION ACTION PROPOSAL

August Management Take
Chapters 41:06:16

Commission Meeting Dates:	**Proposal**	**January 11-12, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Public Hearing	**April 4, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Finalization	**April 4-5, 2024**	**Pierre**

COMMISSION PROPOSAL

Duration of Proposal: 2024 hunting season

Season Dates: August 17 - 31, 2024

Open Area: Meade County south of South Dakota Highway 34, Pennington County west of the Cheyenne River and the counties of Brown, Clark, Codington, Day, Deuel, Edmunds, Faulk, Hamlin, Grant, Marshall, McPherson, Roberts, and Spink.

Daily Bag Limit: 15 Canada geese

Possession Limit: None

Licenses: Residents only

Requirements and Restrictions:

1. Annual Small Game or Combination license and state Migratory Bird Certificate. The Federal Waterfowl stamp is not required.
2. Shooting hours are one-half hour before sunrise to sunset.
3. All other restrictions are the same as during the Early Fall and Regular Canada Goose Season.

Proposed changes from last year:

1. Remove Aurora, Beadle, Bon Homme, Brookings, Clay, Davison, Hanson, Hutchinson, Jerauld, Kingsbury, Lake, Lincoln, McCook, Miner, Minnehaha, Moody, Sanborn, Turner, Union, and Yankton counties from the August Management Take Hunting season unit (Figure 2 and 3).

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDED CHANGES FROM PROPOSAL

None

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

The August Management Take Canada goose season is intended to reduce local Canada goose populations, especially in areas where they are causing chronic depredation to agricultural crops. While depredation concerns continue in some of the counties that are recommended to be removed, there is a greater concern the August Management Take is not currently necessary as a management tool and provides minimal hunting opportunity in counties with low Canada goose populations in August. Canada goose kill permits issued to affected landowners, and harvest during other goose seasons can still be used to remove Canada geese at a localized scale within the proposed closed areas to mitigate potential depredation concerns.

Figure 1. Number of hunters, harvest and effort for the August Management Take by year from 2011 to 2023.

Year	Hunters	Harvest	Average Days Hunted	Average Season Bag
2011	3,211	30,300	2.74	9.44
2012	3,581	36,757	3.08	10.26
2013	2,345	18,592	3.42	7.93
2014	2,302	20,671	3.24	8.98
2015	1,686	10,221	3.03	6.06
2016-20*	Unk	Unk	Unk	Unk
2021	2,463	24,942	2.33	10.13
2022	1,603	14,094	2.47	8.79
2023	1,263	11,035	2.50	8.74

*The 2016-20 seasons were open only west of the Cheyenne River in Pennington County.

Figure 2. Areas open to hunting (gray shaded areas) for the Canada Goose August Management Take in 2023.

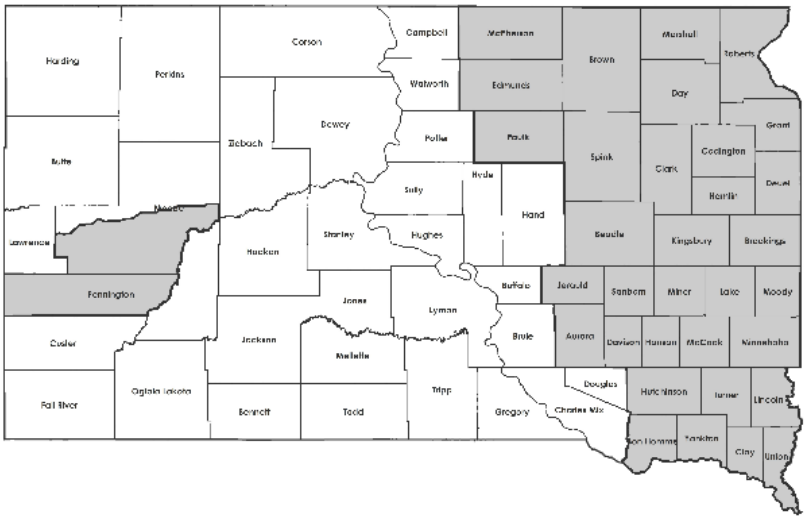
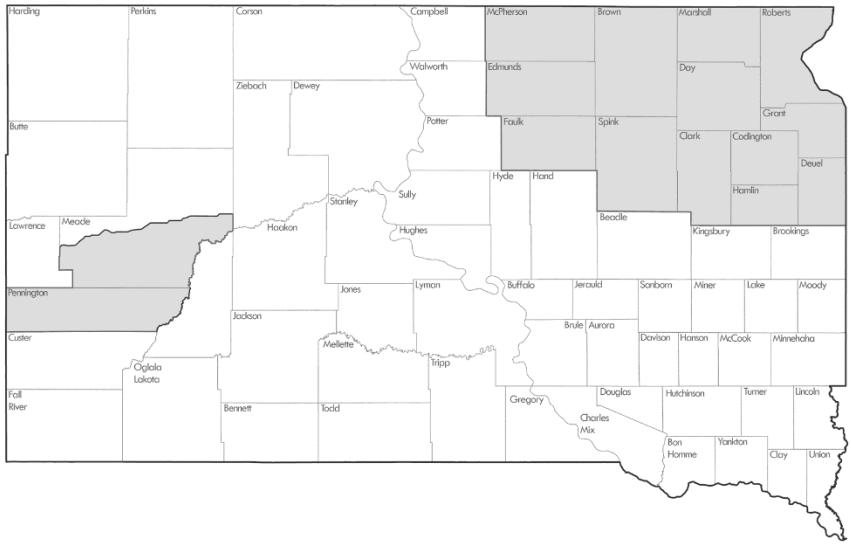


Figure 3. Proposed areas open to hunting (gray shaded areas) for the Canada Goose August Management Take in 2024.



41:06:16:07. Goose hunting season, Conservation Order, and August Management Take established -- Shooting hours -- Exceptions -- Open units -- Closed areas. The light goose hunting season is open statewide for 105 consecutive days beginning on the last Saturday of September. A Conservation Order is open statewide from the day after Unit 2 dark goose season ends to May 15. Only light geese, as defined in § 41:06:16:06.01, may be taken during a Conservation Order. As used in this article, a Conservation Order is a Congressional Order which amends the Fish and Wildlife Service regulations based on a 1999 Congressional action (Pub. L. No. 106-108,) effectively reinstating regulations intended to reduce the population of mid-continent light geese (MCLG). The law authorizes the use of additional hunting methods (electronic calls and unplugged guns) to increase the take of MCLG. As a result, a Conservation Order for the reduction of the MCLG population was authorized.

Additionally, an August Management Take for the taking of Canada geese is open to South Dakota residents beginning on the third Saturday of August through August 31 in Meade County south of South Dakota Highway 34, Pennington County west of the Cheyenne River, and the counties of ~~Aurora, Beadle, Bon Homme, Brookings,~~ Brown, Clark, ~~Clay,~~ Codington, ~~Davison,~~ Day, Deuel, Edmunds, Faulk, Hamlin, ~~Hanson, Hutchinson,~~ Grant, ~~Jerauld, Kingsbury, Lake, Lincoln,~~ Marshall, ~~McCook,~~ McPherson, ~~Miner, Minnehaha, Moody,~~ Roberts, ~~Sanborn,~~ and Spink, ~~Turner, Union and Yankton.~~

The white-fronted goose season is open statewide for 74 consecutive days beginning on the last Saturday of September.

The dark goose season is open statewide as specifically provided for in this section and the special Canada goose hunting units in § 41:06:16:08:

(1) Unit 1: the counties of Aurora, Beadle, Brookings, Brown, Butte, Campbell, Clark, Codington, Corson, Davison, Day, Deuel, Douglas, Edmunds, Faulk, Grant, Haakon, Hamlin, Hand, Hanson, Harding, Hutchinson, Jackson, Jerauld, Jones, Kingsbury, Lake, McCook, McPherson, Marshall, Meade, Mellette, Moody, Miner, Oglala Lakota, Roberts, Sanborn, Spink, Todd, Turner, Walworth, and Ziebach, that portion of Dewey County north of Bureau of Indian Affairs Road 8, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Road 9, and the section of U.S. Highway 212 east of the Bureau of Indian Affairs Road 8 junction, that portion of Potter County east of U.S. Highway 83, that portion of Sully County east of U.S. Highway 83, portions of Hyde, Buffalo, Brule, Charles Mix, and Bon Homme counties north and east of a line beginning at the Hughes-Hyde county line on State Highway 34, east to Lees Boulevard, southeast to the State Highway 34, east 7 miles to 350th Avenue, south to Interstate 90 on 350th Avenue, south and east on State Highway 50 to Geddes, east on 285th Street to U.S. Highway 281, north on U.S. Highway 281 to the Charles Mix-Douglas county boundary, the portion of Bon Homme County north of State Highway 50, the portions of Yankton and Clay counties north of County Highway 585 (306th Street) to U.S. Highway 81, then north on U.S. Highway 81 to 303rd Street, then east on 303rd Street to 444th Avenue, then south on 444th Avenue to 305th Street, then east on Bluff Road (305th Street) to County Highway 19, south to State Highway 50 and east to the Clay/Union County line, and the portion of Perkins County west of State Highway 75 and south of State Highway 20, that portion of Lincoln County west of State Highway 17 and south of County Highway 116 (Klondike Road), and the portion of Minnehaha County north of a line beginning at the junction of the South Dakota-Minnesota state line and County Highway 122 (254th Street) west to its junction with County Highway 149 (464th Avenue), the portion west of County Highway 149 (464th Avenue) to Hartford, the portion west of County Highway 151 (463rd Avenue) to State Highway 42, the portion south of State Highway 42 to State Highway 17, and the portion west of State Highway 17 to the Minnehaha-Lincoln county boundary. The season is open for 107 consecutive days, less the number of days set aside for the Early Fall Canada Goose season established in chapter 41:06:50 that begins on October 1;

(2) Unit 2: those portions of the state not described in Unit 1 and Unit 3. The season is open for 105 consecutive days preceding and including the Sunday closest to February 15; and

(3) Unit 3: Bennett County. The season is open for nine consecutive days beginning on the second Saturday of January.

Except for the light goose Conservation Order, shooting hours for geese are one-half hour before sunrise to sunset daily. The shooting hours for the light goose Conservation Order are one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset daily.

RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT CRITERIA

None

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, REACTIVATION (R3) CRITERIA

1. Does the regulation or fee inhibit a user's ability to participate? There will be less opportunity for hunting in order to conserve Canada goose populations.
2. Does the regulation increase the opportunity for new and existing users? There will be less hunting opportunities.
3. How does the regulation impact the next generation of hunters, anglers, trappers, and outdoor recreationists? The regulation is intended to conserve Canada goose populations.
4. Does the regulation enhance the quality of life for current and future generations by getting families outdoors? NA

FISCAL IMPACT

Waterfowl license sales may decrease because hunting opportunity is decreased.

APPROVE _____	MODIFY _____	REJECT _____	NO ACTION _____

GAME, FISH, AND PARKS COMMISSION ACTION PROPOSAL

Nonresident Waterfowl Hunting Seasons
Chapter 41:06:16

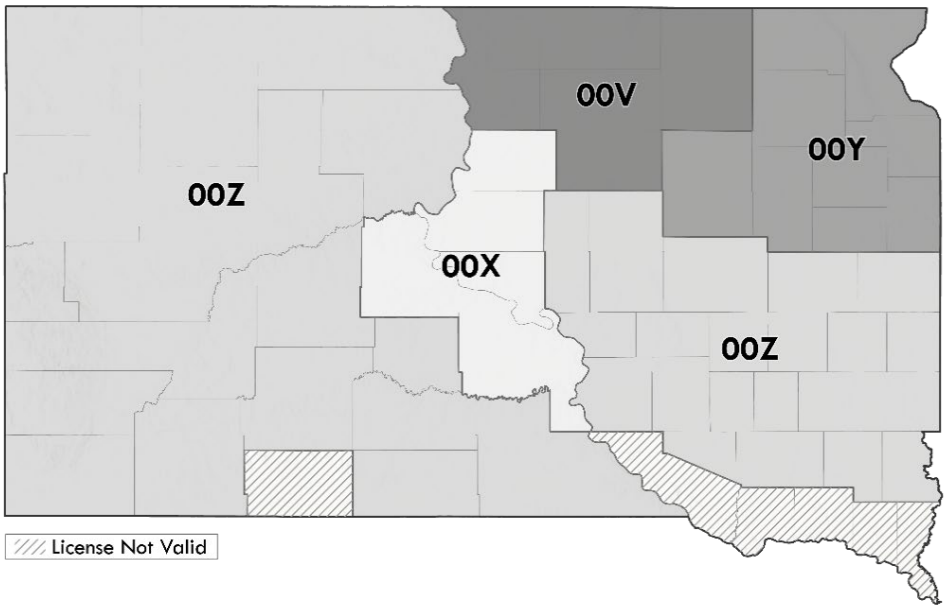
Commission Meeting Dates:	**Proposal**	**January 11-12, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Public Hearing	**April 4, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Finalization	**April 4-5, 2024**	**Pierre**

COMMISSION PROPOSAL

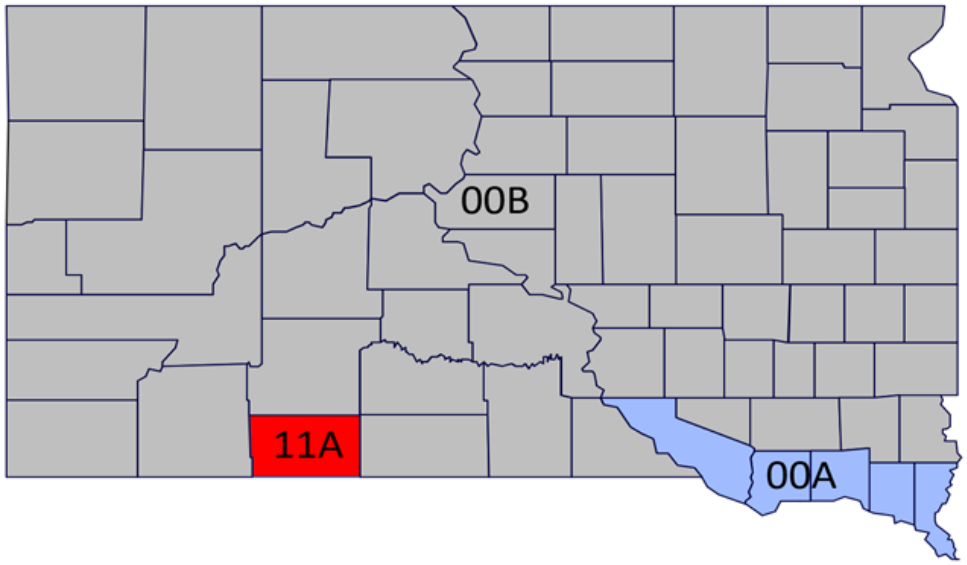
Duration of Proposal: 2024/2025 waterfowl hunting seasons

Licenses: Nonresidents: Limited in all units and seasons. 6,615 licenses.

Current 3-day Nonresident Waterfowl Units



Current 10-day and Season-long Nonresident Waterfowl Units



Proposed changes from last year:

Increase nonresident waterfowl licenses by 5%. Results in 210 additional two 5-day period licenses and 105 additional temporary, 3-day licenses.

Nonresident Waterfowl System

Season/Unit	Private/Public	Length	Description	2023 Licenses	Recommended 2024 Licenses
NRW-00A	Public and Private	Season long	Bon Homme, Charles Mix, Clay, Union, and Yankton counties	250	250
NRW-00B	Public and Private	Two 5-day periods	Statewide except 00A and 11A	3,925	4,135
NRW-11A	Public and Private	Two 5-day periods	Bennett County	25	25
NRW-00V	Private	3 day	Brown, Campbell, Edmunds, Faulk, McPherson and Walworth counties	550	600
NRW-00X	Private	3 day	Hughes, Lyman, Potter, Stanley and Sully counties	750	750
NRW-00Y	Public and Private	3 day	Clark, Codington, Day, Duel, Grant, Hamlin, Marshall, Roberts and Spink counties	500	500
NRW-00Z	Private	3 day	Statewide except Unit 00A, 00X, 00V, 00Y and 11A	300	355
			Total	**6,300**	**6,615**

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDED CHANGES FROM PROPOSAL

None

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

In the past 20 years, waterfowl hunter numbers in South Dakota have dropped 47% from 32,217 in 2003 to 17,042 in 2022. Nearly all of this decrease was the result of fewer resident waterfowl hunters. A 5% license increase to nonresident waterfowl licenses would result in 315 additional licenses compared to the 15,175 fewer waterfowl hunters since 2003. The Nonresident Waterfowl System table above details the proposed 5% nonresident license increase across current units. The recommendations will provide more opportunity in areas where it is difficult to draw licenses while still limiting licenses in the highest hunter density areas.

DRAFT ADMINISTRATIVE RULE CHANGES

41:06:16:11. Maximum number of nonresident waterfowl licenses -- Open units -- Dates -- License restrictions. The maximum number of nonresident waterfowl licenses to be issued by lottery is ~~four thousand two hundred~~ four thousand four hundred and ten special nonresident waterfowl licenses, two thousand early fall Canada goose temporary nonresident licenses, ~~two thousand one hundred~~ two thousand two hundred and five fall three-day temporary nonresident waterfowl licenses, one hundred nonresident youth waterfowl licenses, and ten thousand spring snow goose temporary nonresident licenses divided for administrative purposes as follows:

(1) Unit NRW-00A: the counties of Union, Clay, Yankton, Bon Homme, and Charles Mix. No more than two hundred and fifty special nonresident waterfowl licenses may be issued;

(2) Unit NRW-00B: all open counties not in Units NRW-00A or NRW-11A. No more than ~~three thousand, nine hundred and twenty-five~~ four thousand one hundred and thirty five special nonresident waterfowl licenses may be issued;

(3) Unit NRW-00C: those units as described in § 41:06:50:02. No more than two thousand early fall Canada goose temporary nonresident waterfowl licenses may be issued;

(4) Unit NRW-11A: Bennett County. No more than twenty-five special nonresident waterfowl licenses may be issued. The season in this unit is open for sixty-five consecutive days beginning on the third Saturday of October and during any period that Bennett County is open in January as described in subdivision 41:06:16:07(3);

(5) Unit NRW-00X: the counties of Potter, Stanley, Sully, Hughes, and Lyman. No more than seven hundred and fifty fall three-day, temporary nonresident waterfowl licenses may be issued. The licenses issued pursuant to this subdivision are valid only on private property;

(6) Unit NRW-OOV: the counties of Brown, Campbell, Edmunds, Faulk, McPherson, and Walworth. No more than ~~five hundred and fifty~~ six hundred fall three-day, temporary nonresident waterfowl licenses may be issued. The licenses issued pursuant to this subdivision are valid only on private property;

(7) Unit NRW-00Y: the counties of Spink, Marshall, Roberts, Day, Grant, Clark, Codington, Deuel, and Hamlin. No more than five hundred three-day, temporary nonresident waterfowl licenses may be issued;

(8) Unit NRW-OOZ: statewide except the counties in Units NRW-OOA, NRW-11A, NRW-OOV, NRW-OOX and NRW-OOY. No more than ~~three hundred~~ three hundred and fifty five fall three-day, temporary nonresident waterfowl licenses may be issued. The licenses issued pursuant to this subdivision are valid only on private property;

(9) Unit NRW-ST1: statewide. No more than ten thousand spring snow goose temporary nonresident licenses may be issued. The licenses issued pursuant to this subdivision are valid only during a Conservation Order issued pursuant to 50 CFR § 21.180;

(10) Unit NYW-YW1: statewide. No more than one hundred nonresident youth waterfowl licenses may be issued for the youth waterfowl season established in § 41:06:49:01. A nonresident youth may also hunt during the youth waterfowl season, with a valid waterfowl hunting license, as provided for in this section.

Licenses issued under this section are valid only in the unit for which they are issued. Licenses for Unit NRW-11A include two tags for Canada geese. Each tag is valid for taking one Canada goose, consistent with the provisions of § 41:06:16:09. Each goose must be tagged immediately upon retrieval.

RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT CRITERIA

1. The Issue
    - With the current number of resident hunters participating, increased opportunity for nonresident waterfowl hunting exists without undue impact to hunters or the resource. Standard public input through the commission process will be solicited regarding these proposed changes. Changes can be evaluated through harvest

surveys to gauge participation and satisfaction levels of both resident and nonresident hunters.

2. Historical Considerations NA

3. Biological Considerations
    - Waterfowl populations are generally strong in South Dakota and the Central Flyway. While breeding conditions across the prairie pothole region are constantly changing, current wetland habitat conditions in South Dakota are expected to be good. Duck and Canada goose harvest increases from the proposed changes to nonresident waterfowl will be minimal.

4. Social Considerations
    - The nonresident waterfowl issue is and will continue to be contentious issue, but given the large decrease in resident waterfowl hunter participation in the past 20 years, there is opportunity for nonresidents while still remaining well below hunter numbers in the early 2000s.

5. Financial considerations
    - As with most hunting activities, declining participation threatens funding for conservation, monitoring and management. While increases in financial return will be nominal, increased revenue through license sales is expected. Financial returns of the sporting goods and hospitality industry may also increase through these proposed changes.

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, REACTIVATION (R3) CRITERIA

1. Does the regulation or fee inhibit a user's ability to participate? No.
2. Does the regulation increase the opportunity for new and existing users? Yes, it slightly increases the number of licenses available for the season.
3. How does the regulation impact the next generation of hunters, anglers, trappers and outdoor recreationists? This regulation would provide a slight increase in opportunity for current and new waterfowl hunters.
4. Does the regulation enhance the quality of life for current and future generations by getting families outdoors? Yes.

FISCAL IMPACT

Additional revenue may be generated from the sale of increased license availability for nonresidents.

APPROVE _____	MODIFY _____	REJECT _____	NO ACTION _____

GAME, FISH, AND PARKS COMMISSION ACTION PROPOSAL

Custer State Park Early (Archery) Elk Hunting Season
Chapter 41:06:28

Commission Meeting Dates:	**Proposal**	**January 11-12, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Public Hearing	**April 4, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Finalization	**April 4-5, 2024**	**Pierre**

COMMISSION PROPOSAL

Duration of Proposal: 2024 and 2025 hunting seasons

Season Dates: September 1 – 30.

Licenses: License recommendations included in administrative action document

Requirements and Restrictions:

1. The unit is open within the boundaries of Custer State Park.
2. No person may possess more than one (1) elk license of any type in a year.
3. No more than two persons may submit applications together.
4. There is no landowner preference for this season.
5. A person who receives a license in the first drawing for this season may not apply for that license again.
6. Any elk that is harvested must be inspected by a Department representative within 24 hours after kill.

Proposed changes from last year:

1. Increase the maximum number of licenses from ten to twenty “any elk” licenses and provide the option for up to twenty “antlerless elk” licenses. License number and tag type recommendations for the next two years are included in the following administrative action item.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDED CHANGES FROM PROPOSAL

None

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

The proposed maximum number of elk licenses is established in administrative rule and the GFP Commission will propose and finalize the specific number of licenses and tag types and allocations amongst hunting units via administrative action.

Table 1. Number of elk hunters, applicants, harvest success, and elk harvested by year during the Custer State Park Early Archery Elk season.

Year	Licensed Hunters	Applicants	Harvest Success Rate	Bulls Harvested	Cows Harvested
2014	4	3,023	100%	4	0
2015	4	3,600	75%	3	0
2016	3	3,707	33%	1	0
2017	3	3,704	33%	1	0
2018	3	3,772	67%	2	0
2019	3	4,055	100%	3	0
2020	3	4,353	33%	1	0
2021	3	4,456	33%	1	0
2022	4	4,904	50%	2	0
2023	4	5,028	50%	2	0

DRAFT ADMINISTRATIVE RULE CHANGES

41:06:28:01. Custer State Park early archery elk hunting season established -- Number and type of licenses -- Season dates. The Custer State Park early archery elk hunting season is open one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset each day and is restricted by chapter 41:06:07. No more than ~~ten~~ twenty "any elk" licenses and no more than twenty “antlerless elk” licenses may be issued for the Custer State Park early archery elk hunting season. The Custer State Park early archery elk hunting season is open from September 1 through September 30.

RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT CRITERIA

None

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, REACTIVATION (R3) CRITERIA

None

FISCAL IMPACT

None

APPROVE _____ MODIFY _____ REJECT _____ NO ACTION _____

GAME, FISH, AND PARKS COMMISSION ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

Custer State Park Early (Archery) Elk Hunting Season
Chapter 41:06:28

Commission Meeting Dates:	**Public Hearing**	**April 4, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Finalization	**April 4-5, 2024**	**Pierre**

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION

Licenses: 5 resident "Any Elk" licenses and 0 "Antlerless Elk" licenses.

2023

CSP Archery Elk		
Season	Resident Licenses	
	Any Elk 21	Atl Elk 23
CEE-CU1	4	

2024-2025

CSP Archery Elk		
Season	Resident Licenses	
	Any Elk 21	Atl Elk 23
CEE-CU1	5	

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

Bull harvest age-structure has been currently above the objective of 60% of the harvested bulls 4.5 years old or older. This supports increasing bull harvest to provide more opportunity. Aerial helicopter surveys are planned for 2025, and adjustments can be made to antlerless licenses next year, if the population has exceeded the population objective range of 500 to 600.

2023 Custer State Park Archery Elk Harvest Projections

Last Revised: 23 Jan 2024

Resident Licenses						Harvest Projections								
Unit/Type	Appl. 1st Choice *	Avail.	Sold	Resp.	Success	Bulls	Cows	Bull Calves	Cow Calves	Total Elk Harvested	CI (95%)	Elk Shot Not Recovered	Avg Satisfctn Score	Avg Days Hunted
CU1-21	5,028	4	4	100%	50%	2	0	0	0	2	+/-0	0	7.00	16.8

* Number of 1st drawing applicants with that unit as 1st choice.

APPROVE _____ MODIFY _____ REJECT _____ NO ACTION _____

GAME, FISH, AND PARKS COMMISSION ACTION PROPOSAL

Custer State Park (Firearm) Elk Hunting Season
Chapter 41:06:27

Commission Meeting Dates:	**Proposal**	**January 11-12, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Public Hearing	**April 4, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Finalization	**April 4-5, 2024**	**Pierre**

COMMISSION PROPOSAL

Duration of Proposal: 2024 and 2025 hunting seasons

Season Dates: October 1 – 31.

Licenses: License recommendations included in administrative action document

Requirements and Restrictions:

1. The unit is open within the boundaries of Custer State Park.
2. No person may possess more than one (1) elk license of any type in a year.
3. No more than two persons may submit applications together.
4. There is no landowner preference for this season.
5. A person who receives a license in the first drawing for this season may not apply for that license again.
6. Any elk that is harvested must be inspected by a Department representative within 24 hours after kill.

Proposed changes from last year:

1. Increase the maximum number of licenses from twenty to thirty “any elk” licenses and the option to provide up to thirty “antlerless elk” licenses. License number and tag type recommendations for the next two years are included in the following administrative action item.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDED CHANGES FROM PROPOSAL

None

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

The proposed maximum number of elk licenses is established in administrative rule and the GFP Commission will propose and finalize the specific number of licenses and tag types and allocations amongst hunting units via administrative action.

Table 1. Number of elk hunters, applicants, harvest success, and elk harvested by year during the Custer State Park firearm elk season.

Year	Licensed Hunters	Applicants	Harvest Success Rate	Bulls Harvested	Cows Harvested
2014	4	8,084	100%	4	0
2015	8	9,136	100%	8	0
2016	9	8,958	89%	8	0
2017	9	8,828	88%	8	0
2018	9	8,670	86%	8	0
2019	9	8,949	89%	8	0
2020	9	9,385	89%	8	0
2021	8	9,215	89%	8	0
2022	11	9,672	100%	11	0
2023	11	9,725	100%	11	NA

Table 2. Number of elk hunters, applicants, harvest success, and elk harvested by year during the Special Custer State Park antlerless elk season.

Year	Licensed Hunters	Applicants	Harvest Success Rate	Bulls Harvested	Cows Harvested
2014	Season Closed				
2015	Season Closed				
2016	20	3,138	90%	0	18
2017	29	3,436	86%	1	24
2018	23	3,175	19%	0	4
2019	Season Closed				
2020	Season Closed				
2021	Season Closed				
2022	Season Closed				
2023	Season Closed				

DRAFT ADMINISTRATIVE RULE CHANGES

41:06:27:01. Custer State Park elk hunting season established -- Number and type of licenses -- Season dates. The Custer State Park elk hunting season is open from one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset each day of the season and is restricted by chapter 41:06:07. No more than ~~20~~ thirty "any elk" licenses and no more than thirty “antlerless elk” licenses may be issued for the Custer State Park elk hunting season. The Custer State Park elk hunting season for Unit CUE-CU1 is open from October 1 through October 31.

RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT CRITERIA

None

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, REACTIVATION (R3) CRITERIA

None

FISCAL IMPACT

None

APPROVE _____ MODIFY _____ REJECT _____ NO ACTION _____

GAME, FISH, AND PARKS COMMISSION ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

Custer State Park (Firearm) Elk Hunting Season
Chapter 41:06:27

Commission Meeting Dates:	**Public Hearing**	**April 4, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Finalization	**April 4-5, 2024**	**Pierre**

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION

Licenses: 16 resident "Any Elk" licenses, including 1 raffle "Any Elk" license, and 0 "Antlerless Elk" licenses.

One of the licenses shall be a raffle "Any Elk" license that is valid during the Custer State Park elk hunting season and the Black Hills elk hunting season. The raffle license is not valid during the Custer State Park archery hunting season nor the Black Hills archery elk hunting season.

2023

CSP Firearm Elk		
Season	Resident Licenses	
	Any Elk 21	Atl Elk 23
CUE-CU1	11	
RAFFLE	1	

2024-2025

CSP Firearm Elk		
Season	Resident Licenses	
	Any Elk 21	Atl Elk 23
CUE-CU1	15	
RAFFLE	1	

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

Bull harvest age-structure has been above the objective of 60% of the harvested bulls 4.5 years old or older and harvest success has consistently been 100% or slightly below. The recommendation follows the elk action plan objective and supports increasing bull harvest to provide more opportunity. Aerial helicopter surveys are planned for 2025, and adjustments can be made to antlerless licenses next year, if the population has exceeded the population objective range of 500 to 600.

2023 Custer State Park Firearm Elk Harvest Projections

Last Revised: 23 Jan 2024

Resident Licenses						Harvest Projections								
Unit/Type	Appl. 1st Choice *	Avail.	Sold	Resp.	Success	Bulls	Cows	Bull Calves	Cow Calves	Total Elk Harvested	CI (95%)	Elk Shot Not Recovered	Avg Satisfctn Score	Avg Days Hunted
CU1-21	9,725	11	11	64%	100%	11	0	0	0	11	+/-0	0	6.86	3.4

* Number of 1st drawing applicants with that unit as 1st choice.

APPROVE _____ MODIFY _____ REJECT _____ NO ACTION _____

GAME, FISH, AND PARKS COMMISSION ACTION PROPOSAL

Special Custer State Park Antlerless Elk Hunting Season
Chapter 41:06:47

Commission Meeting Dates:	**Proposal**	**January 11-12, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Public Hearing	**April 4, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Finalization	**April 4-5, 2024**	**Pierre**

COMMISSION PROPOSAL

Duration of Proposal: 2024 and 2025 hunting seasons

Season Dates: Season is currently closed.

Licenses: 0 “Antlerless Elk” licenses.

Requirements and Restrictions:

1. The unit is open within the boundaries of Custer State Park.
2. No person may possess more than one (1) elk license of any type in a year.
3. No more than two persons may submit applications together.
4. There is no landowner preference for this season.
5. No person who receives a license in the first drawing for this season shall be eligible to apply for a Special Custer State Park antlerless elk license in first drawings for next nine years.
6. Any elk that is harvested must be inspected by a Department representative within 24 hours after kill.

Proposed changes from last year:

1. Specify the option to provide up to twenty “antlerless elk” licenses. No antlerless licenses are recommended for this season.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDED CHANGES FROM PROPOSAL

None

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

The proposed maximum number of elk licenses is established in administrative rule and the GFP Commission will propose and finalize the specific number of licenses and tag types and allocations amongst hunting units via administrative action. GFP recommends to keep the Custer State Park Special Antlerless Elk Hunting Season closed.

Table 1. Number of elk hunters, applicants, harvest success, and elk harvested by year during the Special Custer State Park antlerless elk season.

Year	Licensed Hunters	Applicants	Harvest Success Rate	Bulls Harvested	Cows Harvested
2014	Season Closed				
2015	Season Closed				
2016	20	3,138	90%	0	18
2017	29	3,436	86%	1	24
2018	23	3,175	19%	0	4
2019	Season Closed				
2020	Season Closed				
2021	Season Closed				
2022	Season Closed				
2023	Season Closed				

DRAFT ADMINISTRATIVE RULE CHANGES

41:06:47:01. Special Custer State Park antlerless elk hunting season established -- Number and type of licenses available -- Season dates. The ~~special~~ Special Custer State Park "antlerless elk" hunting season is open from one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset each day of the season and is restricted by chapter 41:06:07. No more than twenty "antlerless elk" licenses may be issued for the ~~special~~ Special Custer State Park "antlerless elk" hunting season.

RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT CRITERIA

None

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, REACTIVATION (R3) CRITERIA

None

FISCAL IMPACT

None

APPROVE _____ MODIFY _____ REJECT _____ NO ACTION _____

GAME, FISH, AND PARKS COMMISSION ACTION PROPOSAL

Archery (Black Hills) Elk Hunting Season
Chapter 41:06:43

Commission Meeting Dates:	**Proposal**	**January 11-12, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Public Hearing	**April 4, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Finalization	**April 4-5, 2024**	**Pierre**

COMMISSION PROPOSAL

Duration of Proposal: 2024 and 2025 hunting seasons

Season Dates: September 1 – 30.

Licenses: License recommendations included in administrative action document

Open Areas: See Figure 1.

Requirements and Restrictions:

1. No person may possess more than one (1) elk license of any type in a year.
2. No more than two persons may submit applications together.
3. Except for landowner/operator preference applicants, no person who receives a license in the first drawing for this season shall be eligible to apply for a Black Hills archery elk hunting license in first drawings for next nine years.
4. One-half of the licenses allocated in each unit are available for landowner/operator preference application. Only one member of each qualifying landowner/operator household may apply every year.
5. Any elk that is harvested must be inspected by a Department representative within 24 hours after kill.

Proposed changes from last year:

1. Increase the maximum number of “any elk” licenses from 200 to 300 and “antlerless elk” licenses from 150 to 300. License number and tag type recommendations for the next two years are included in the following administrative action item.

2. Clean-up Administrative Rule to match unit boundary descriptions for Black Hills Archery Elk with Black Hills Firearm Elk.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDED CHANGES FROM PROPOSAL

None

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

The proposed maximum number of elk licenses is established in administrative rule and the GFP Commission will propose and finalize the specific number of licenses and tag types and allocations amongst hunting units via administrative action.

Figure 1. Map of Archery Elk Season hunting units in the Black Hills.

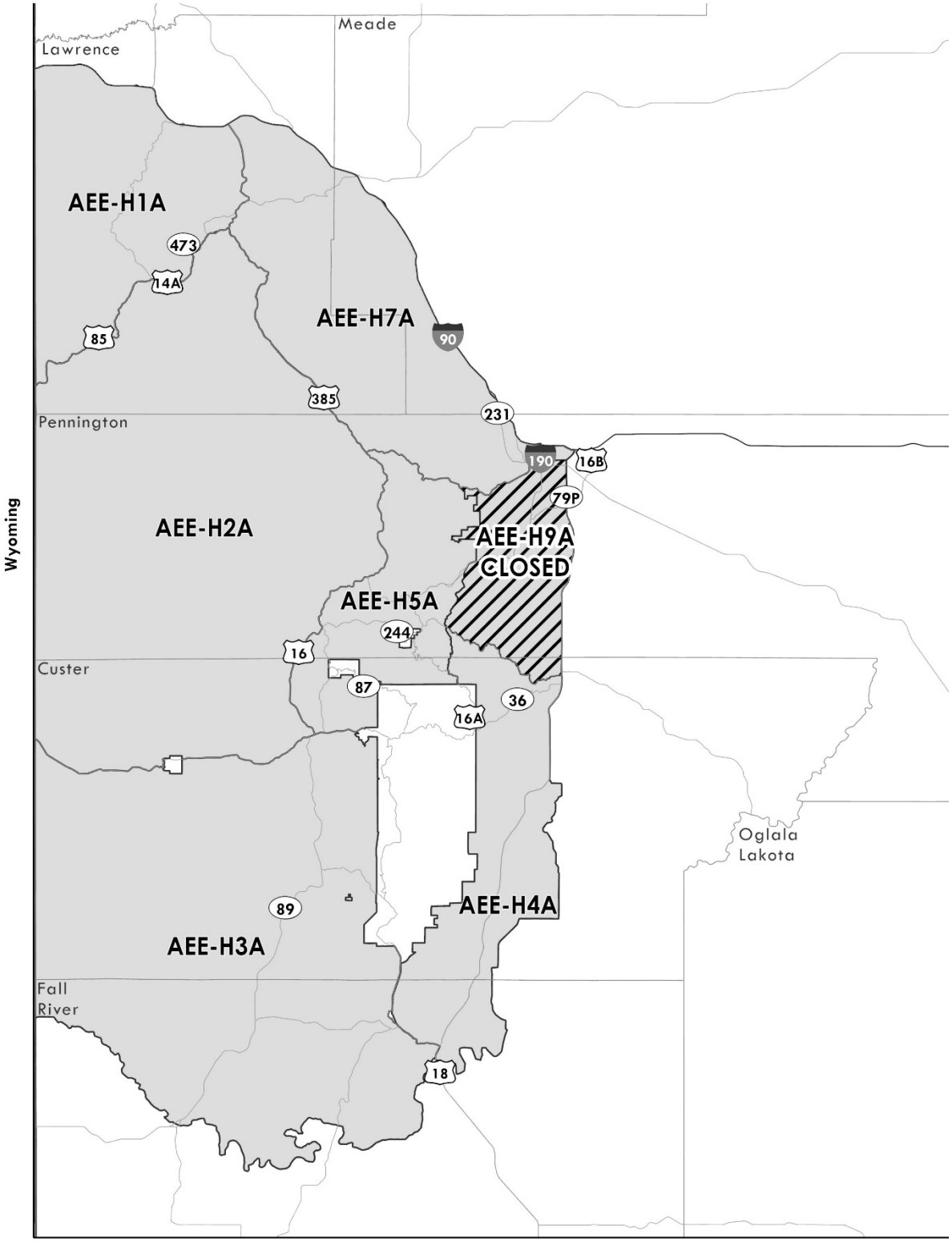


Table 1. Number of elk hunters, applicants, harvest success, and elk harvested by year during the Archery Elk Season in the Black Hills.

Year	Licensed Hunters	Applicants	Harvest Success Rate	Bulls Harvested	Cows Harvested
2014	106	4,256	40%	38	4
2015	196	4,761	34%	55	12
2016	280	4,965	29%	57	25
2017	269	4,892	26%	50	20
2018	219	5,006	38%	65	19
2019	216	5,382	42%	77	14
2020	204	5,884	45%	80	12
2021	219	5,966	44%	82	14
2022	269	6,319	40%	89	18
2023	258	6,375	44%	103	10

DRAFT ADMINISTRATIVE RULE CHANGES

41:06:43:01. Archery elk hunting season established -- Number and type of licenses available -- Season dates. The archery elk hunting season is open from one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset each day of the season. No more than ~~200~~ 300 "any elk" licenses and ~~150~~ no more than 300 "antlerless elk" licenses may be issued for the archery elk hunting season. The archery elk hunting season for Units AAE-H1A, AAE-H2A, AAE-H3A, AAE-H4A, AAE-H5A, AAE-H7A, and AAE-H9A is open from September 1 through September 30.

41:06:43:02. Open units. The following is a description of the open units for the archery elk hunting season:
(1) Unit AEE-H1A: the portion of Lawrence County within a line beginning at the junction of the South Dakota-Wyoming border and Interstate 90, then easterly on Interstate 90 to the junction of U.S. Highway 85 at Exit 17, then southerly on U.S. Highway 85 to its junction with the South Dakota-Wyoming border, then northerly along the South Dakota-Wyoming border to its junction with Interstate 90, the point of beginning;
(2) Unit AEE-H2A: those portions of Lawrence, Pennington, and Custer Counties beginning at the junction of the South Dakota-Wyoming border and U.S. Highway 85, then northerly and easterly along U.S. Highway 85 to its junction with U.S. Highway 385, then southerly along U.S. Highway 385 to its junction with U.S. Highway 16 at Custer, then westerly along U.S. Highway 16 to its junction with the South Dakota-Wyoming border, then northerly along the South Dakota-Wyoming border to its junction with U.S. Highway 85, the point of beginning;
(3) Unit AEE-H3A: ~~those portions of Pennington, Lawrence, and Meade Counties beginning at U.S. Highway 14A at Sturgis, then westerly along U.S. Highway 14A to its junction with U.S. Highway 85 at Deadwood, then southerly along U.S. Highway 85 to its junction with U.S. Highway 385 at Pluma, then southeasterly along U.S. Highway 385 to its junction with Pennington County Road C228 (Sheridan Lake Road), then easterly along Pennington County Road C228 to its junction with State Highway 44 in Rapid City, then northerly along State Highway 44 in Rapid City to its junction with State Highway 79 (Sturgis Road) in Rapid City, then northwesterly along State Highway 79 to its junction with Interstate 90 in Black Hawk, then northwesterly along Interstate 90 to Sturgis, the point of beginning;~~ those portions of Custer and Fall River Counties within a line beginning at the junction of the South Dakota-Wyoming state line and U.S. Highway 16, then east along U.S. Highway 16 to the Custer State Park western boundary, then south along the Custer State Park western boundary and the Wind Cave National Park western boundary to U.S. Highway 385, then south along U.S. Highway 385 to State Highway 79, then south along State Highway 79 to the Cheyenne River, then west along the Cheyenne River to the South Dakota-Wyoming state line, then north along the state line to the point of beginning;
(4) Unit AEE-H4A: those portions of Pennington, Custer, and Fall River Counties beginning at the junction of U.S. Highway 385 and the southern boundary of Wind Cave National Park, then southerly

along U.S. Highway 385 through Hot Springs and Maverick Junction to its junction with the Cheyenne River, then northeasterly along the Cheyenne River to its junction with Fall River County Road 6291 (South Buffalo Gap Road), then northerly along Fall River County Road 6291 and Custer County Road 101 to Buffalo Gap and its junction with Custer County Road 656 (River Side Road), then easterly along Custer County Road 656 one-half mile to Custer County Road 17 (Beaver Valley Road), then northerly and easterly along Custer County Road 17 to its junction with Custer County Road 719 (South Fairburn Road), then northerly along Custer County Road 719 to Fairburn to its junction with Custer County Road 18, then northerly along Custer County Road 18 (North Fairburn Road) to its junction with U.S. Highway 79, then northerly along U.S. Highway 79 to its junction with State Highway 40, then northwesterly along State Highway 40 to its junction with Pennington County Road 330 (Playhouse Road), then southerly along Pennington County Road 330 to its junction with U.S. Highway16A, then southerly along U.S. Highway 16A to its junction with the north boundary of Custer State Park, then easterly along the Custer State Park boundary to the northeast corner of Custer State Park, then southerly along the east boundaries of Custer State Park and Wind Cave National Park to the southeast corner of Wind Cave National Park, then westerly along the south boundary of Wind Cave National Park to its junction with U.S. Highway 385, the point of beginning;

(5) Unit AEE-H5A: those portions of Pennington and Custer Counties beginning at the junction of U.S. Highway 16A and the west boundary of Custer State Park, then westerly along U.S. Highway 16A to its junction with U.S. Highway 385 at Custer, then northerly along U.S. Highway 385 to its junction with State Highway 44 near Pactola Lake, then easterly along State Highway 44 to its junction with the Black Hills National Forest boundary, then southerly along the Black Hills National Forest boundary to its junction with U.S. Highway 16, then westerly along U.S. Highway 16 to its junction with the South Rockerville Road at Rockerville, then southerly along the South Rockerville Road to its junction with State Highway 40 at Harney, then easterly along State Highway 40 approximately 1,000 feet to its junction with the Playhouse Road, then southerly along the Playhouse Road to its junction with U.S. Highway 16A near Spokane, then southeasterly along U.S. Highway 16A to its junction with the north boundary of Custer State Park, then westerly and southerly along the Custer State Park boundary to its junction with U.S. Highway 16A, the point of beginning. The Rushmore National Memorial, including all private lands within the memorial, is closed;

(6) Unit AEE-H7A: those portions of Pennington, ~~Meade, and Lawrence~~ Lawrence, and Meade Counties within a line beginning at the junction of U.S. Highway 85 and Interstate 90 at Exit 17, then southerly along U.S. Highway 85 to its junction with U.S. Highway 385 at Pluma, then southerly along U.S. Highway 385 to its junction with State Highway 44 near Pactola, then easterly along State Highway 44 to its junction with State Highway 79 (Sturgis Road) ~~at~~ in Rapid City, then northerly along State Highway 79 to its junction with Interstate 90 at Black Hawk, then northerly along Interstate 90 to its junction with U.S. Highway 85 at Exit 17, the point of beginning; and

(7) Unit AEE-H9A: those portions of Custer and Pennington Counties within an area bounded as follows: beginning at the junction of State Highway 40 and State Highway 79 at Hermosa, then northerly along State Highway 79 to its junction with State Highway 44 in Rapid City, then westerly along State Highway 44 to its junction with U.S. Highway 16, then westerly along U.S. Highway 16 to its junction with the South Rockerville Road, then southerly along the South Rockerville Road to its junction with State Highway 40, then easterly along State Highway 40 to its junction with State Highway 79 at Hermosa, the point of beginning.

RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT CRITERIA

None

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, REACTIVATION (R3) CRITERIA

None

FISCAL IMPACT

None

APPROVE _____	MODIFY _____	REJECT _____	NO ACTION _____

GAME, FISH, AND PARKS COMMISSION ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

Archery (Black Hills) Elk Hunting Season
Chapter 41:06:43

Commission Meeting Dates:	**Public Hearing**	**April 4, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Finalization	**April 4-5, 2024**	**Pierre**

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION

Licenses: 192 resident "Any Elk" licenses and 90 resident "Antlerless Elk" licenses

2023

Archery Elk			
Unit	Resident Licenses		
	Any Elk 21	Atl Elk 23	
H1A	30	20	
H2A	100	40	
H3A	40	30	
H4A			
H5A	2		
H7A	10		
H9A			
TOTAL	**182**	**90**	**272**

2024-2025

Archery Elk			
Unit	Resident Licenses		
	Any Elk 21	Atl Elk 23	
H1A	30	10	
H2A	100	40	
H3A	40	30	
H4A	10	10	
H5A	2		
H7A	10		
H9A			
TOTAL	**192**	**90**	**282**

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

Population modeling results suggest the elk population increased between 2022 and 2024. More bulls can be harvested from a larger population without adversely affecting the age-structure. In addition, bull harvest age-structure has been above the objective of 60% of the harvested bulls 4.5 years old or older, which supports increasing bull harvest. Forage conditions across the Black Hills are favorable and maintaining the same number of antlerless licenses will continue to grow the population towards 8,000 elk. Aerial helicopter surveys are planned for 2025, and adjustments can be made to antlerless licenses next year, if the population has exceeded the population objective range of 6,000 to 8,000.

Elk populations in unit H4A have increased and meetings with landowners in the mostly privately owned unit have resulted in support for opening the archery season and including 10 any elk and 10 antlerless archery elk licenses.

2023 Archery Elk Harvest Projections

Last Revised: 23 Jan 2024

Resident Licenses						Harvest Projections								
Unit/Type	Appl. 1st Choice *	Avail.	Sold	Resp.	Success	Bulls	Cows	Bull Calves	Cow Calves	Total Elk Harvested	CI (95%)	Elk Shot Not Recovered	Avg Satisfctn Score	Avg Days Hunted
H1A-21	792	30	30	83%	64%	18	0	1	0	19	+/-2	6	6.0	11.2
H1A-23	7	20	16	47%	0%	0	0	0	0	0	+/-0	2	5.2	11.6
H2A-21	4,458	100	100	75%	63%	63	0	0	0	63	+/-6	17	6.3	12.3
H2A-23	58	40	36	59%	20%	0	7	0	0	7	+/-4	7	5.6	10.5
H3A-21	834	40	40	88%	43%	17	0	0	0	17	+/-2	5	5.1	13.1
H3A-23	8	30	24	67%	13%	0	3	0	0	3	+/-2	0	4.3	8.7
H5A-21	19	2	2	50%	0%	0	0	0	0	0	+/-0	0	1.0	6.0
H7A-21	199	10	10	90%	44%	4	0	0	0	4	+/-1	0	5.3	12.9
Totals	**6,375**	**272**	**258**	73.7%	44.1%	102	10	1	0	**114**	**+/- 18**	**37**	**5.66**	**11.64**

The response rate for all units combined is: 73.7%

Satisfaction scale of 1=very dissatisfied to 7=very satisfied.

* Number of 1st drawing applicants with that unit as 1st choice.

APPROVE _____ MODIFY _____ REJECT _____ NO ACTION _____

GAME, FISH, AND PARKS COMMISSION ACTION PROPOSAL

Black Hills (Firearm) Elk Hunting Season
Chapter 41:06:26

Commission Meeting Dates:	**Proposal**	**January 11-12, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Public Hearing	**April 4, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Finalization	**April 4-5, 2024**	**Pierre**

COMMISSION PROPOSAL

Duration of Proposal: 2024 and 2025 hunting seasons

Season Dates: See Figure 2 for map.

Units	Season Dates
Any Elk Units: H1A, H2A, H3A, H4A, H5A, and H7A*	October 1 - 31
Antlerless Elk Units: H1B, H2B, H2E, H4B, H7B, and H9B	October 15 - 31 AND December 1 - 16
Antlerless Elk Units: H2H, H3B, and H3E	October 15 - 31
Antlerless Elk Units: H2C, H2F, H2I, H3C and H3F	December 1 - 16
Antlerless Elk Units: H2G, H2J, H3D, and H3G	December 17 - 31

* H9A is not currently listed in § 41:06:26:01. See recommended changes from proposal.

Licenses: License recommendations included in administrative action document

Requirements and Restrictions:

1. No person may possess more than one (1) elk license of any type in a year.
2. No more than two persons may submit applications together.
3. Except for landowner/operator preference applicants, no person who receives a license in the first drawing for this season shall be eligible to apply for a Black Hills (firearm) elk license in first drawings for next nine years.
4. One-half of the licenses allocated in each unit are available for landowner/operator preference application. Only one member of each qualifying landowner/operator household may apply every year.
5. Any elk that is harvested must be inspected by a Department representative within 24 hours after kill.

Proposed changes from last year:

1. Increase the maximum number of “any elk” licenses from 600 to 800 and “antlerless elk” licenses from 1,200 to 1,500. License number and tag type recommendations for the next two years are included in the following administrative action item.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDED CHANGES FROM PROPOSAL

Recommended changes from proposal:

1. Rule clean-up to include BHE-9A among units with a season that runs from October 1 through October 31. These season dates include all any elk licenses during the Black Hills Firearm Elk hunting season.

2. Rule clean-up to change BHE-2B and BHE-2E season dates from October 1 through October 31 and December 1 through December 16 to only occur from October 1 through October 31.

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

The proposed maximum number of elk licenses is established in administrative rule and the GFP Commission will propose and finalize the specific number of licenses and tag types and allocations amongst hunting units via administrative action.

Black Hills Firearm Elk hunting unit BHE-H9A season was excluded from administrative rule § 41:06:26:01. The recommended change is intended to accurately include BHE-H9A season dates to coincide with all other any elk hunting seasons including BHE-H1A, BHE-H2A, BHE-H3A, BHE-H4A, BHE-H5A, and BHE-H7A.

Black Hills Firearm Elk hunting units BHE-H2B and BHE-H2E seasons were specified in administrative rule § 41:06:26:01 to run from October 15 to October 31 and December 1 to December 16. However, the December season dates overlap with other antlerless hunting seasons in these units, BHE-H2C and BHE-H2F. The recommended change is intended to accurately specify season dates for BHE-H2B and BHE-H2E to coincide with other antlerless elk hunting seasons including BHE-H2H, BHE-H3B, and BHE-H3E.

Figure 1. Proposed rule clean-up to any elk (H9A) and antlerless elk (H2B, H2E) hunting season dates. Underlined text indicates added units and struck through text indicates removed units.

Recommended Units	Season Dates
Any Elk Units: H1A, H2A, H3A, H4A, H5A, H7A, and H9A	October 1 - 31
Antlerless Elk Units: H1B, ~~H2B, H2E,~~ H4B, H7B, and H9B	October 15 - 31 AND December 1 - 16
Antlerless Elk Units: H2B, H2E, H2H, H3B, and H3E	October 15 - 31
Antlerless Elk Units: H2C, H2F, H2I, H3C and H3F	December 1 - 16
Antlerless Elk Units: H2G, H2J, H3D, and H3G	December 17 - 31

Figure 1. Map of Black Hills elk season hunting units for “any elk” license types (left panel) and proposed units for “antlerless elk” license types (right panel).

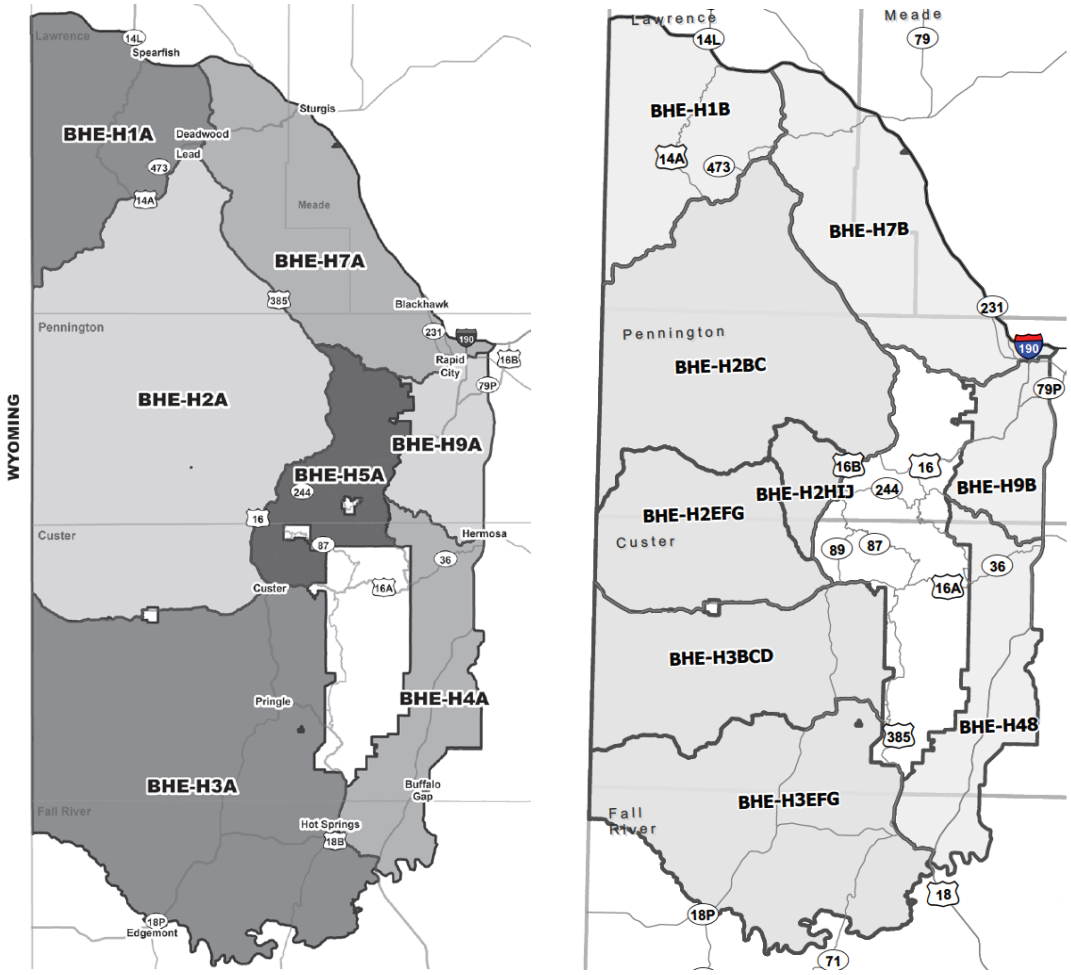


Table 1. Number of elk hunters, applicants, harvest success, and elk harvested by year during the Black Hills firearm elk season.

Year	Licensed Hunters	Applicants	Harvest Success Rate	Bulls Harvested	Cows Harvested
2014	664	11,461	71%	295	178
2015	922	12,126	71%	312	345
2016	1,745	12,692	62%	363	724
2017	1,581	12,201	66%	364	682
2018	1,124	11,871	64%	315	402
2019	1,108	12,396	62%	332	354
2020	926	13,198	63%	360	224
2021	954	12,656	65%	370	249
2022	1,265	13,447	64%	426	381
2023	1,232	12,999	63%	435	344

DRAFT ADMINISTRATIVE RULE CHANGES

41:06:26:01. Black Hills elk hunting season established -- Number and type of licenses -- Season dates. The Black Hills elk hunting season is open from one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset each day of the season. No more than ~~600~~ 800 "any elk" licenses and ~~1,200~~ no more than 1,500 "antlerless elk" licenses may be issued for the Black Hills elk hunting season. The Black Hills elk hunting seasons are as follows:

(1) Units BHE-H1A, BHE-H2A, BHE-H3A, BHE-H4A, BHE-H5A, ~~and~~ BHE-H7A, and BHE-H9A are open from October 1 through October 31;

(2) Units BHE-H1B, ~~BHE-H2B, BHE-H2E,~~ BHE-H4B, BHE-H7B, and BHE-H9B are open from October 15 through October 31 and from December 1 through December 16;

(3) Units BHE-H2B, BHE-H2E, BHE-H2H, BHE-H3B, and BHE-H3E are open from October 15 through October 31;

(4) Units BHE-H2C, BHE-H2F, BHE-H2I, BHE-H3C, and BHE-H3F are open from December 1 through December 16; and

(5) Units BHE-H2D, BHE-H2G, BHE-H2J, BHE-H3D, and BHE-H3G are open from December 17 through December 31.

RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT CRITERIA

None

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, REACTIVATION (R3) CRITERIA

None

FISCAL IMPACT

None

APPROVE _____ MODIFY _____ REJECT _____ NO ACTION _____

GAME, FISH, AND PARKS COMMISSION ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

Black Hills (Firearm) Elk Hunting Season
Chapter 41:06:26

Commission Meeting Dates:	**Public Hearing**	**April 4, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Finalization	**April 4-5, 2024**	**Pierre**

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION

Licenses: 570 resident "Any Elk" licenses and 730 resident "Antlerless Elk" licenses

2023

Black Hills Elk			
Unit	Resident Licenses		
	Any Elk 21	Atl Elk 23	
H1A	60		
H1B		65	
H2A	290		
H2B		50	
H2C		50	
H2D			
H2E		40	
H2F		40	
H2G		40	
H2H		10	
H2I		10	
H2J		10	
H3A	120		
H3B		45	
H3C		45	
H3D		45	
H3E		60	
H3F		60	
H3G		60	
H4A	20		
H4B		40	
H5A	5		
H7A	25		
H7B		20	
H9A	15		
H9B		40	
TOTAL	**535**	**730**	**1,265**

2024-2025

Black Hills Elk			
Unit	Resident Licenses		
	Any Elk 21	Atl Elk 23	
H1A	60		
H1B		65	
H2A	300		
H2B		50	
H2C		50	
H2D			
H2E		40	
H2F		40	
H2G		40	
H2H		10	
H2I		10	
H2J		10	
H3A	120		
H3B		45	
H3C		45	
H3D		45	
H3E		60	
H3F		60	
H3G		60	
H4A	40		
H4B		40	
H5A	5		
H7A	30		
H7B		20	
H9A	15		
H9B		40	
TOTAL	**570**	**730**	**1,300**

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

Population modeling results suggest the elk population increased between 2022 and 2024. More bulls can be harvested from a larger population without adversely affecting the age-structure. In addition, bull harvest age-structure has been above the objective of 60% of the harvested bulls 4.5 years old or older, which supports increasing bull harvest. Forage conditions across the Black Hills are favorable and maintaining the same number of antlerless licenses will continue to grow the population towards 8,000 elk. Aerial helicopter surveys are planned for 2025, and adjustments can be made to antlerless licenses next year, if the population has exceeded the population objective range of 6,000 to 8,000.

2023 Black Hills Firearm Elk Harvest Projections

Last Revised: 23 Jan 2024

	Resident Licenses					Harvest Projections								
Unit/Type	Appl. 1st Choice *	Avail.	Sold	Resp.	Success	Bulls	Cows	Bull Calves	Cow Calves	Total Elk Harvested	CI (95%)	Elk Shot Not Recovered	Avg Satisfctn Score	Avg Days Hunted
H1A-21	1,290	60	60	73%	79%	45	3	0	0	47	+/-4	4	5.74	8.7
H1B-23	51	65	62	69%	60%	0	35	1	0	37	+/-5	1	5.90	7.8
H2A-21	8,649	290	289	74%	85%	235	9	0	0	244	+/-7	23	5.90	7.2
H2B-23	202	50	47	64%	53%	0	22	0	3	25	+/-5	2	4.83	5.3
H2C-23	28	50	48	67%	69%	0	30	0	3	33	+/-4	2	5.61	4.8
H2E-23	108	40	37	68%	68%	0	25	0	0	25	+/-4	7	5.76	5.6
H2F-23	38	40	39	77%	67%	0	26	0	0	26	+/-3	5	5.70	4.9
H2G-23	19	40	39	72%	50%	0	18	1	0	20	+/-4	0	5.88	2.9
H2H-23	9	10	8	88%	57%	0	5	0	0	5	+/-1	0	5.43	7.0
H2I-23	7	10	9	44%	0%	0	0	0	0	0	+/-0	0	2.50	11.0
H2J-23	2	10	10	70%	57%	0	6	0	0	6	+/-2	0	6.00	4.6
H3A-21	1,859	120	120	71%	85%	96	6	0	0	102	+/-5	7	5.79	7.9
H3B-23	28	45	44	48%	33%	0	13	2	0	15	+/-6	4	4.70	5.7
H3C-23	11	45	41	56%	48%	0	18	2	0	20	+/-6	2	4.77	4.5
H3D-23	16	45	45	80%	33%	0	14	0	1	15	+/-3	0	4.47	5.4
H3E-23	26	60	58	69%	35%	0	20	0	0	20	+/-5	1	4.29	4.5
H3F-23	14	60	57	77%	32%	0	18	0	0	18	+/-4	3	4.45	4.2
H3G-23	5	60	57	53%	50%	0	29	0	0	29	+/-7	2	5.14	4.3
H4A-21	91	20	20	65%	100%	20	0	0	0	20	+/-0	2	5.62	4.4
H4B-23	5	40	40	65%	35%	0	14	0	0	14	+/-4	0	4.88	5.1
H5A-21	44	5	5	100%	80%	4	0	0	0	4	+/-0	0	5.20	3.0
H7A-21	402	25	25	60%	87%	18	3	0	0	22	+/-3	2	5.93	8.9
H7B-23	23	20	18	72%	62%	0	10	1	0	11	+/-3	1	6.31	5.6
H9A-21	67	15	15	33%	60%	9	0	0	0	9	+/-5	3	6.00	1.8
H9B-23	5	40	39	72%	36%	0	14	0	0	14	+/-4	0	4.63	6.6
Totals	**12,999**	**1,265**	**1,232**	68.9%	63.2%	427	337	8	7	**779**	**+/- 94**	**71**	**5.41**	**6.13**

The response rate for all units combined is: 68.9%

Satisfaction scale of 1=very dissatisfied to 7=very satisfied.

* Number of 1st drawing applicants with that unit as 1st choice.

APPROVE _____ MODIFY _____ REJECT _____ NO ACTION _____

GAME, FISH, AND PARKS COMMISSION ACTION PROPOSAL

Prairie Elk Hunting Season
Chapter 41:06:59

Commission Meeting Dates:	**Proposal**	**January 11-12, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Public Hearing	**April 4, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Finalization	**April 4-5, 2024**	**Pierre**

COMMISSION PROPOSAL

Duration of Proposal: 2024 and 2025 hunting seasons

Season Dates:

Units	License Types	Season Dates
PRE-09A	Any Elk	Sept 15 - Oct 31 AND Dec 1 - 31
PRE-11A	Antlerless Elk	July 15 - Aug 31
PRE-11B	Any Elk	Sept 1 - Oct 15
PRE-11C	Any Elk	Oct 16 - Nov 31
PRE-11D	Antlerless Elk	Sep 1 - Oct 31
PRE-11E	Antlerless Elk	Nov 1 - Dec 31
PRE-15A	Any Elk	Sep 1 - Oct 31 AND Dec 1 - 31
PRE-15B	Antlerless Elk	Dec 1 - Jan 31
PRE-27A	Both	Oct 1 - 31 AND Dec 1 - 31
PRE-35A	Any Elk	Sept 15 - Oct 31 AND Dec 1 - 31
PRE-35B	Any Elk	Sept 15 - Oct 31 AND Dec 1 - 31
PRE-35C	Antlerless Elk	Oct 1 - Nov 15
PRE-35D	Antlerless Elk	Nov 16 - Dec 31
PRE-35E	Antlerless Elk	Oct 1 - Nov 15
PRE-35F	Antlerless Elk	Nov 16 - Dec 31
PRE-49A	Both	Sept 15 - Oct 31 AND Dec 1 - 31
PRE-WRA	Both	Sept 1 - Dec 31

Licenses: License recommendations included in administrative action document

Open Areas: See Figure 1.

Requirements and Restrictions:

1. No person may possess more than one (1) elk license of any type in a year.
2. No more than two persons may submit applications together.
3. Except for landowner/operator preference applicants, no person who receives a license in the first drawing for this season shall be eligible to apply for a Prairie elk license in first drawings for next nine years.
4. One-half of the licenses allocated in each unit are available for landowner/operator preference application. Only one member of each qualifying landowner/operator household may apply every year.
5. Any elk that is harvested must be inspected by a Department representative within 24 hours after kill.

Proposed changes from last year:

1. Increase the maximum number of “any elk” licenses from 150 to 200 and “antlerless elk” licenses from 300 to 400. License number and tag type recommendations for the next two years are included in the following administrative action item.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDED CHANGES FROM PROPOSAL

Recommended changes from proposal:

1. Minor rule clean-up to specify PRE-27A currently includes the portions of Fall River county not included in units BHE-H3 and BHE-H4. Previously, only BHE-H3 was listed as areas within Fall River County not included in PRE-27A.

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

The proposed maximum number of elk licenses is established in administrative rule and the GFP Commission will propose and finalize the specific number of licenses and tag types and allocations amongst hunting units via administrative action.

Figure 1. Map of Prairie elk season hunting units.

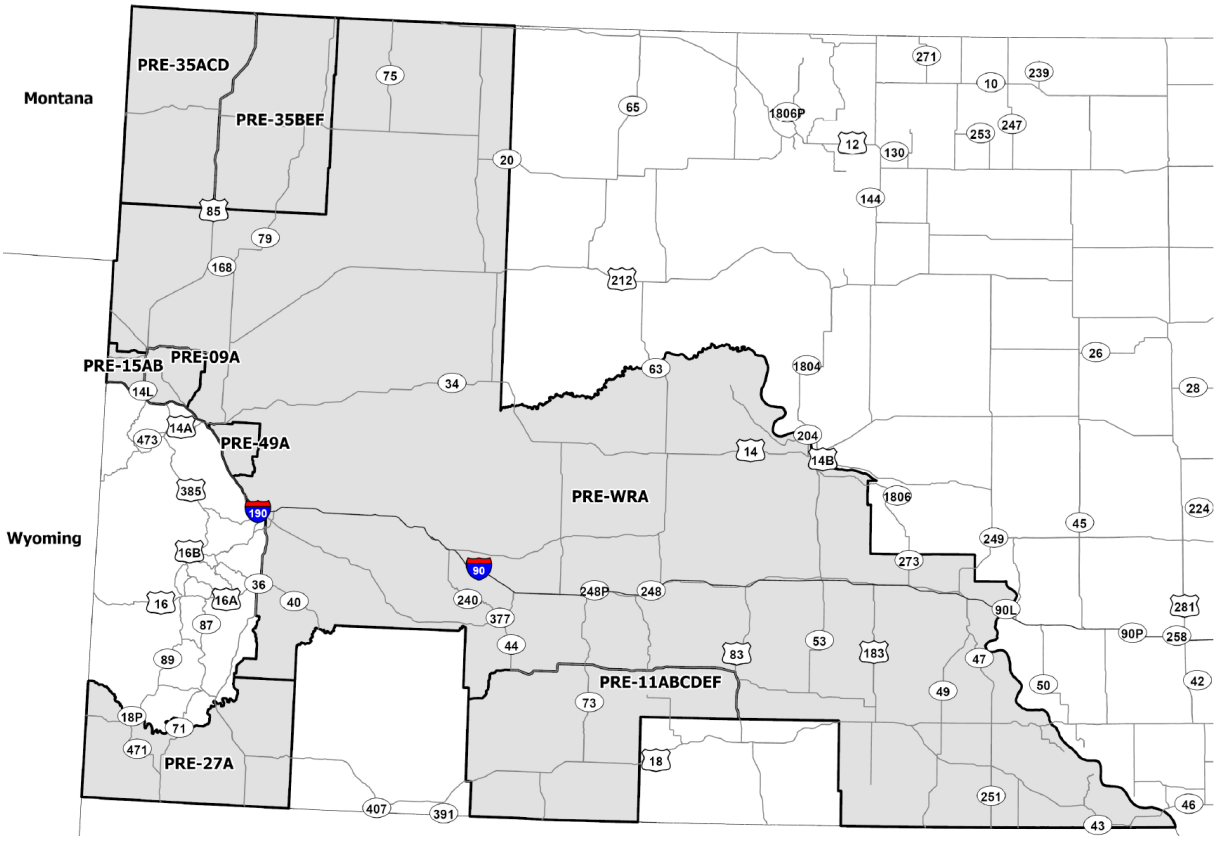


Table 1. Number of elk hunters, applicants, harvest success, and elk harvested by year during the Prairie elk season.

Year	Licensed Hunters	Applicants	Harvest Success Rate	Bulls Harvested	Cows Harvested
2014	92	1,725	64%	33	25
2015	98	2,119	55%	29	25
2016	148	2,272	40%	32	27
2017	149	2,249	50%	41	34
2018	139	3,080	79%	59	51
2019	140	3,831	65%	41	50
2020	251	4,532	57%	56	87
2021	257	4,912	50%	57	71
2022	270	5,037	48%	74	55
2023	258	5,438	51%	78	53

DRAFT ADMINISTRATIVE RULE CHANGES

41:06:59:01. Prairie elk hunting season established -- Number and type of licenses available -- Season dates. The prairie elk hunting season is open from one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset each day of the season. No more than ~~150~~ 200 "any elk" licenses and ~~300~~ no more than 400 "antlerless elk" licenses may be issued for the prairie elk hunting season. The prairie elk hunting seasons are as follows:

(1) Unit PRE-09A is open from September 15 through October 31 and from December 1 through December 31;

(2) Unit PRE-11A is open from July 15 through August 31;

(3) Unit PRE-11B is open from September 1 through October 15;

(4) Unit PRE-11C is open from October 16 through November 30;

(5) Unit PRE-11D is open from September 1 through October 31;

(6) Unit PRE-11E is open from November 1 through December 31;

(7) Unit PRE-11F is open from January 1 through the last day of February;

(8) Unit PRE-15A is open from September 1 through October 31 and from December 1 through December 31;

(9) Unit PRE-15B is open from December 1 through January 31;

(10) Unit PRE-27A is open from October 1 through October 31 and from December 1 through December 31;

(11) Unit PRE-35A is open from September 15 through October 31 and December 1 through December 31;

(12) Unit PRE-35B is open from September 15 through October 31 and December 1 through December 31;

(13) Unit PRE-35C is open from October 1 through November 15;

(14) Unit PRE-35D is open from November 16 through December 31;

(15) Unit PRE-35E is open from October 1 through November 15;

(16) Unit PRE-35F is open from November 16 through December 31;

(17) Unit PRE-49A is open from September 15 through October 31 and from December 1 through December 31; and

(18) Unit PRE-WRA is open from September 1 through December 31.

41:06:59:02. Open units. The following is a description of the open units for the prairie elk hunting season:

(1) Unit PRE-09A: those portions of Lawrence and Butte Counties within a line beginning at the intersection of U.S. Highways 85 and 212, then east on Highway 212 to Whitewood Valley Road, then south on Whitewood Valley Road to Interstate 90, then west on Interstate 90 to U.S. Highway 85, then north on U.S. Highway 85 to the point of beginning;

(2) Unit PRE-11A: Bennett County, the portion of Jackson County south of State Highway 44 and Bureau of Indian Affairs Highway 2, and those portions of Mellette County south of State Highway 44 and west of U.S. Highway 83;

(3) Unit PRE-11B: Bennett County, the portion of Jackson County south of State Highway 44 and Bureau of Indian Affairs Highway 2, and those portions of Mellette County south of State Highway 44 and west of U.S. Highway 83;

(4) Unit PRE-11C: Bennett County, the portion of Jackson County south of State Highway 44 and Bureau of Indian Affairs Highway 2, and those portions of Mellette County south of State Highway 44 and west of U.S. Highway 83;

(5) Unit PRE-11D: Bennett County, the portion of Jackson County south of State Highway 44 and Bureau of Indian Affairs Highway 2, and those portions of Mellette County south of State Highway 44 and west of U.S. Highway 83;

(6) Unit PRE-11E: Bennett County, the portion of Jackson County south of State Highway 44 and Bureau of Indian Affairs Highway 2, and those portions of Mellette County south of State Highway 44 and west of U.S. Highway 83;

(7) Unit PRE-11F: Bennett County, the portion of Jackson County south of State Highway 44 and Bureau of Indian Affairs Highway 2, and those portions of Mellette County south of State Highway 44 and west of U.S. Highway 83;

(8) Unit PRE-15A: the portion of Butte County beginning at the junction of the South Dakota-Wyoming border, east on Sourdough Road to U.S. Highway 85, then south on U.S. Highway 85 to Interstate 90, then west on Interstate 90 to the South Dakota-Wyoming border, then north to the point of beginning;

(9) Unit PRE-15B: the portion of Butte County beginning at the junction of the South Dakota-Wyoming border, east on Sourdough Road to U.S. Highway 85, then south on U.S. Highway 85 to Interstate 90, then west on Interstate 90 to the South Dakota-Wyoming border, then north to the point of beginning;

(10) Unit PRE-27A: the portion of Fall River County not included in BHE-H3 or BHE-H4;

(11) Units PRE-35A, PRE-35C, and PRE-35D: the portion of Harding County west of U.S. Highway 85;

(12) Units PRE-35B, PRE-35E, and PRE-35F: the portion of Harding County east of U.S. Highway 85;

(13) Unit PRE-49A: the portion of Meade County within a line beginning at the junction of Interstate 90 and Elk Creek Road, then east on Elk Creek Road to Ricard Road, then north on Ricard Road to Tilford Road, then east on Tilford Road to Middle Alkalai Road, then north on Middle Alkalai Road to Alkalai Road, then west on Alkalai Road 133rd Avenue, then south on 133rd Avenue to 206th Street, then west on 206th Street to Lazelle Street to Interstate 90 then south on Interstate 90 to the point of beginning; and

(14) Unit PRE-WRA: the portion of the state west of the Missouri River not associated with another prairie elk unit, excluding the Lower Brule Indian Reservation and Corson, Dewey, Oglala Lakota, Todd, and Ziebach Counties.

RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT CRITERIA

None

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, REACTIVATION (R3) CRITERIA

None

FISCAL IMPACT

None

APPROVE _____ MODIFY _____ REJECT _____ NO ACTION _____

GAME, FISH, AND PARKS COMMISSION ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

Prairie Elk Hunting Season
Chapter 41:06:59

Commission Meeting Dates:	**Public Hearing**	**April 4, 2024**	**Pierre**
	Finalization	**April 4-5, 2024**	**Pierre**

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION

Licenses: 126 resident "Any Elk" licenses and 210 "Antlerless Elk" licenses.

2023

Prairie Elk			
Unit	Resident Licenses		
	Any Elk 21	Atl Elk 23	
9A	4		
11A		5	
11B	16		
11C	16		
11D		30	
11E		10	
11F			
15A	8		
15B		5	
27A	20	20	
35A	10		
35B	8		
35C		15	
35D		15	
35E		20	
35F		20	
49A	10	15	
WRA	10	20	
TOTAL	**102**	**175**	**277**

2024-2025

Prairie Elk			
Unit	Resident Licenses		
	Any Elk 21	Atl Elk 23	
9A	8	10	
11A			
11B	16		
11C	16		
11D		30	
11E		10	
11F			
15A	8		
15B		5	
27A	30	30	
35A	10		
35B	8		
35C		15	
35D		15	
35E		20	
35F		20	
49A	10	15	
WRA	20	40	
TOTAL	**126**	**210**	**336**

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

Anecdotal reports and observations suggest the elk population on the prairie continues to grow. It is likely much of the growth and expansion has occurred in WRA unit, where Any Elk and Antlerless Elk licenses are recommended to be increased. Similarly, the population in 9A (mostly in Lawrence County) and 27A (mostly Fall River County) appears to be increasing, resulting in recommended increases in license numbers.

2023 Prairie Firearm Elk Harvest Projections

Last Revised: 23 Jan 2024

	Resident Licenses					Harvest Projections							Avg	Avg
Unit/Type	Appl. 1st Choice *	Avail.	Sold	Resp.	Success	Bulls	Cows	Bull Calves	Cow Calves	Total Elk Harvested	CI (95%)	Elk Shot Not Recovered	Satisfctn Score	Days Hunted
09A-21	151	4	4	100%	100%	4	0	0	0	4	+/-0	0	6.5	2.3
11A-23	17	5	4	100%	50%	0	2	0	0	2	+/-0	0	4.8	4.8
11B-21	491	16	16	63%	90%	14	0	0	0	14	+/-2	3	5.5	6.0
11C-21	186	16	16	75%	67%	11	0	0	0	11	+/-2	1	5.1	5.3
11D-23	88	30	28	78%	38%	0	11	0	0	11	+/-3	1	4.4	4.1
11E-23	19	10	10	40%	25%	0	0	0	3	3	+/-3	0	3.5	5.3
15A-21	134	8	8	75%	67%	5	0	0	0	5	+/-2	1	5.7	8.2
15B-23	5	5	3										0.0	0.0
27A-21	679	20	19	84%	88%	17	0	0	0	17	+/-1	2	5.7	8.0
27A-23	21	20	16	75%	50%	0	8	0	0	8	+/-2	0	5.1	2.1
35A-21	993	10	10	80%	88%	9	0	0	0	9	+/-1	3	6.4	8.3
35B-21	1,304	8	8	75%	83%	7	0	0	0	7	+/-1	0	5.0	6.0
35C-23	30	15	15	73%	36%	0	5	0	0	5	+/-2	0	4.0	8.0
35D-23	14	15	13	77%	20%	0	3	0	0	3	+/-2	0	3.8	7.0
35E-23	52	20	18	67%	33%	0	5	0	2	6	+/-3	0	4.2	4.8
35F-23	29	20	20	78%	29%	0	4	0	1	6	+/-3	0	3.6	7.4
49A-21	166	10	10	80%	50%	5	0	0	0	5	+/-2	1	6.1	14.8
49A-23	10	15	12	67%	38%	0	5	0	0	5	+/-2	0	4.7	8.0
WRA-21	985	10	10	80%	63%	6	0	0	0	6	+/-2	1	5.4	15.5
WRA-23	64	20	18	78%	36%	0	6	0	0	6	+/-2	0	5.6	6.2
Totals	**5,438**	**277**	**258**	74.6%	51.0%	78	48	0	5	132	**+/- 34**	15	**4.81**	**6.65**

The response rate for all units combined is: 74.6%

Satisfaction scale of 1=very dissatisfied to 7=very satisfied.

* Number of 1st drawing applicants with that unit as 1st choice.

APPROVE _____ MODIFY _____ REJECT _____ NO ACTION _____

2024-2025 Elk Hunting Seasons

2023

Black Hills (Firearm) Elk			
Unit	Resident Licenses		
	Any Elk 21	Atl Elk 23	
H1A	60		
H1B		65	
H2A	290		
H2B		50	
H2C		50	
H2D			
H2E		40	
H2F		40	
H2G		40	
H2H		10	
H2I		10	
H2J		10	
H3A	120		
H3B		45	
H3C		45	
H3D		45	
H3E		60	
H3F		60	
H3G		60	
H4A	20		
H4B		40	
H5A	5		
H7A	25		
H7B		20	
H9A	15		
H9B		40	
TOTAL	**535**	**730**	**1,265**

2024-2025

Black Hills (Firearm) Elk			
Unit	Resident Licenses		
	Any Elk 21	Atl Elk 23	
H1A	60		
H1B		65	
H2A	300		
H2B		50	
H2C		50	
H2D			
H2E		40	
H2F		40	
H2G		40	
H2H		10	
H2I		10	
H2J		10	
H3A	120		
H3B		45	
H3C		45	
H3D		45	
H3E		60	
H3F		60	
H3G		60	
H4A	40		
H4B		40	
H5A	5		
H7A	30		
H7B		20	
H9A	15		
H9B		40	
TOTAL	**570**	**730**	**1,300**

2023

Archery (Black Hills) Elk			
Unit	Resident Licenses		
	Any Elk 21	Atl Elk 23	
H1A	30	20	
H2A	100	40	
H3A	40	30	
H4A			
H5A	2		
H7A	10		
H9A			
TOTAL	**182**	**90**	**272**

2024-2025

Archery (Black Hills) Elk			
Unit	Resident Licenses		
	Any Elk 21	Atl Elk 23	
H1A	30	10	
H2A	100	40	
H3A	40	30	
H4A	10	10	
H5A	2		
H7A	10		
H9A			
TOTAL	**192**	**90**	**282**

2024-2025 Elk Hunting Seasons

2023

Prairie Elk			
Unit	Resident Licenses		
	Any Elk 21	Atl Elk 23	
9A	4		
11A		5	
11B	16		
11C	16		
11D		30	
11E		10	
11F			
15A	8		
15B		5	
27A	20	20	
35A	10		
35B	8		
35C		15	
35D		15	
35E		20	
35F		20	
49A	10	15	
WRA	10	20	
TOTAL	**102**	**175**	**277**

2024-2025

Prairie Elk			
Unit	Resident Licenses		
	Any Elk 21	Atl Elk 23	
9A	8	10	
11A			
11B	16		
11C	16		
11D		30	
11E		10	
11F			
15A	8		
15B		5	
27A	30	30	
35A	10		
35B	8		
35C		15	
35D		15	
35E		20	
35F		20	
49A	10	15	
WRA	20	40	
TOTAL	**126**	**210**	**336**

2023

CSP Early (Archery) Elk		
Season	Resident Licenses	
	Any Elk 21	Atl Elk 23
CEE-CU1	4	

2024-2025

CSP Early (Archery) Elk		
Season	Resident Licenses	
	Any Elk 21	Atl Elk 23
CEE-CU1	5	

2023

CSP (Firearm) Elk		
Season	Resident Licenses	
	Any Elk 21	Atl Elk 23
CUE-CU1	11	
RAFFLE	1	

2024-2025

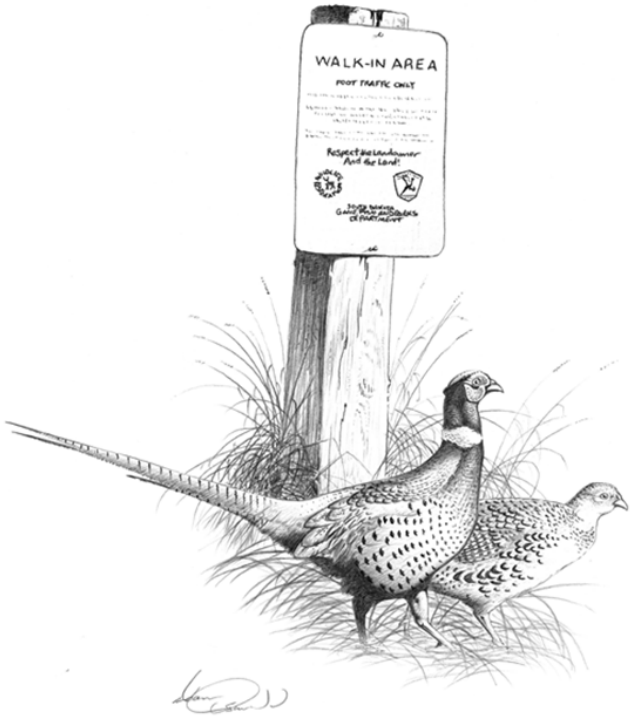
CSP (Firearm) Elk		
Season	Resident Licenses	
	Any Elk 21	Atl Elk 23
CUE-CU1	15	
RAFFLE	1	

February YTD Camping

1/1/2023 - 2/28/2023	1/1/2024 - 2/29/2024
Nights	Nights
570	749

District	Facility Name	Camping Units	Camping Units
	Fort Sisseton State Park	0	2
	Pickerel Lake Recreation Area	0	7
1	Roy Lake State Park	48	110
	Lake Louise Recreation Area	2	2
	Mina Lake Recreation Area	2	7
2	Richmond Lake Recreation Area	4	5
	Hartford Beach State Park	19	19
	Lake Cochrane Recreation Area	0	55
	Pelican Lake Recreation Area	6	9
3	Sandy Shore Recreation Area	1	0
	Lake Poinsett Recreation Area	11	20
	Lake Thompson Recreation Area	33	59
4	Oakwood Lakes State Park	15	8
	Lake Herman State Park	3	5
5	Walkers Point Recreation Area	5	5
	Buryanek Recreation Area	6	7
6	Snake Creek Recreation Area	2	3
	Big Sioux State Recreation Area	50	40
	Lake Vermillion Recreation Area	23	12
7	Palisades State Park	61	51
	Newton Hills State Park	38	46
8	Union Grove State Park	1	5
	Clay County Park	8	0
9	Lewis and Clark Recreation Area	5	19
	North Point Recreation Area	2	9
	Pease Creek Recreation Area	0	1
10	Randall Creek Recreation Area	0	1
	Farm Island Recreation Area	4	6
11	West Bend Recreation Area	43	3
	Cow Creek Recreation Area	0	2
12	Oahe Downstream Recreation Area	18	78
	Indian Creek Recreation Area	12	10
13	West Pollock Recreation Area	10	2
14	Bear Butte State Park	64	0
	Rocky Point Recreation Area	12	15
15	Shadehill Recreation Area	18	23
16	Custer State Park	27	67
	Angostura Recreation Area	17	35
17	Sheps Canyon Recreation Area	0	1

Ring-necked Pheasant Action Plan, 2024–2028



SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF GAME, FISH AND PARKS PIERRE, SOUTH DAKOTA

WILDLIFE DIVISION REPORT TBD

DATE 2024

This action plan will be used by South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks staff on an annual basis and will be formally evaluated at least every five years. Plan updates and changes, however, may occur more frequently as needed.

A supportive document to this action plan, the "Management of Ring-necked Pheasant in South Dakota," provides a historical background, research, management surveys and population monitoring, best management practices, challenges and opportunities related to ring-necked pheasant and can be found at https://gfp.sd.gov/management-plans/.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Action Plan Coordinator − Alex Solem, South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks

Management Plan Team − Nathan Baker, Ryan Wendinger, Julie Lindstrom, Trenton Haffley, Alex Solem, Eric Magedanz, Dan Sternhagen, Mark Norton, Jacob Wolfe, and Andrew Norton of South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks.

Cover art by Adam Oswald, 2009. All text and data contained within this document are subject to revision for corrections, updates, and data analyses.

Recommended citation:

South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks, Division of Wildlife. 2024. South Dakota ring-necked pheasant action plan, 2024−2028. Wildlife Division Report Number *TO BE DETERMINED*. South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks, Pierre, USA.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

A draft of the "South Dakota ring-necked pheasant action plan" was available for public comment from INSERT DATES HERE.

INTRODUCTION

The diverse landscape of South Dakota is characterized by an array of habitats and abundant natural resources. For many outdoor enthusiasts, no other wildlife species in the state is as recognized or valued as the pheasant. Though the ring-necked pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*; hereafter, pheasant) is not native to South Dakota, they have become naturalized to the mosaic of grassland and agricultural land habitat found in much of the state.

From the first successful releases of pheasants in 1908 to the most recent estimated population of over 7.1 million birds in 2018, South Dakotans and our visitors have built a rich and deeply rooted tradition around pheasants and pheasant hunting. The opening weekend in October is an event anticipated not only by pheasant hunters, but also family and friends who are reunited during this social gathering.

With a high rate of annual mortality, pheasants are a short-lived bird with the capability of high reproductive rates. The quantity, quality, and distribution of season-specific habitats and weather conditions are the primary factors that influence pheasant populations. As a result, wildlife managers focus on the development and management of suitable habitat to meet the needs of pheasants throughout their annual life cycle, including nesting, brood-rearing, and winter cover.

Since their introduction and expansion in areas of interspersed cropland, grassland and other habitats, pheasant populations have been notably high on 4 occasions: the early 1930s following the Great Depression and drought period when much farmland was idle; the mid-1940s during and just after World War II when again much habitat was unintentionally created on idled cropland; the early 1960s at the peak of the Soil Bank Program; and most recently, during the first 10 years of the 21st century, as a result of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres and favorable weather conditions. Periods between these population peaks experienced large scale declines in available upland habitat across much of the pheasant range.

Pheasant management in South Dakota primarily involves: working with cooperating agencies and landowners to develop and manage quality pheasant habitat; monitoring populations through harvest surveys and hunter satisfaction; and developing season structures that allow harvest of surplus roosters and maximum hunter participation. August roadside surveys, otherwise known as pheasant brood surveys, were conducted to develop a population index and fall pheasant hunting forecast. This survey was discontinued in 2020 to focus on a new department priority promoting habitat and access. Currently, South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) uses hunter harvest surveys to evaluate pheasant and pheasant hunter demographics. Significant efforts by wildlife managers, biologists, and private landowners to develop and manage pheasant habitat, and provide access on both public and private lands are the current focus of GFP. In addition, a wealth of knowledge has been obtained through previous research and survey results on pheasant biology and their response to various habitat management techniques and land use changes.

While South Dakota historically and currently supports high pheasant populations, there could be significant issues and challenges ahead for South Dakota's state bird. The loss of high-quality habitat provided by CRP, accelerated conversion of native prairies and wetlands to cropland agriculture, reduction in acres and funding available for conservation programs in the Farm Bill, changing of landowner and hunter demographics, budget and funding sources, and the need for additional public hunting access are issues that face wildlife managers today that will continue in the future.

Held in public trust, GFP is responsible for the conservation and management of pheasants and their associated habitats for the benefit of this wildlife resource and for the citizens and visitors of this state. Undoubtedly, the strategic and responsible conservation practices intended for pheasants will have benefits to other wildlife species located in South Dakota. Therefore, a proactive approach is necessary to address these emerging issues to ensure abundant pheasant populations will be available to provide and support our hunting heritage for present and future generations.

HUNTER HARVEST SURVEYS

Pheasant harvest has been estimated since the inaugural pheasant season established in 1919. As many as 6,439,000 pheasants have been harvested in a single season (1944), although season lengths have differed through time. The hunter harvest surveys are conducted annually and sent to approximately 15,000 residents and 15,000 nonresidents. Small game license holders are randomly selected and surveyed to estimate total harvest, number of days hunted, harvest distribution, and hunting satisfaction. No shooting preserve license holders are surveyed for these estimates and none of their harvest is included in any data for estimates regarding pheasant harvest. Historic survey response rates are approximately 30% for resident and nonresident hunters.

HUNTER AND HARVEST TRENDS

As expected, there is correlation between pheasant populations, pheasant harvest, and the number of pheasant hunters. An estimated 1,000 hunters participated during the inaugural pheasant season in 1919, with approximately 212,000 hunters participating during the high pheasant year of 1963. During the past 10 years (2013–2022), the average number of residents, nonresidents and total hunters are reported as 56,712, 72,843, and 129,555, respectively (Figure 1). During the same seasons of 2013−2022, pheasant harvest averaged 1,054,900 with a high of 1,255,878 in 2015 (Figure 2).

HABITAT AND ACCESS

Pheasants are a product of South Dakota's diverse agricultural landscape and pheasant populations are strongly associated with land use trends and farmland habitat. In addition to the effects of weather conditions, the quantity, quality, and interspersion of habitat types are major factors in the seasonal and annual survival and reproductive capability of pheasants. Since much of the land base in South Dakota is privately owned (80%), private landowners are the primary stewards of habitat and the wildlife it supports. Recognizing that high quality habitat on private land is necessary to sustain good pheasant populations, GFP has focused much effort on agricultural land use issues (e.g., Federal Farm Bill and agricultural policy), as well as habitat development and management on private land. This collaborative approach between private landowners, GFP, and other conservation partners has been and will continue to be critical in providing excellent pheasant management and public hunting opportunities at a statewide level.

GFP delivers a comprehensive private lands habitat and access program, with numerous options available to private landowners for habitat management and development. Cost-share and incentive programs, as well as technical assistance, are available for food habitat plots, woody habitat, habitat fencing, grass seedings, grazing systems, wetland creations, wetland restorations, and riparian area enhancement (Table 1). GFP added an additional eight private lands habitat biologists to the existing four in late 2021 to increase the delivery of these habitat programs and promote public access options to landowners across South Dakota. Extensive

descriptions of these conservation programs can be found on the Private Lands page of GFP's website (https://gfp.sd.gov/landowner-programs/).

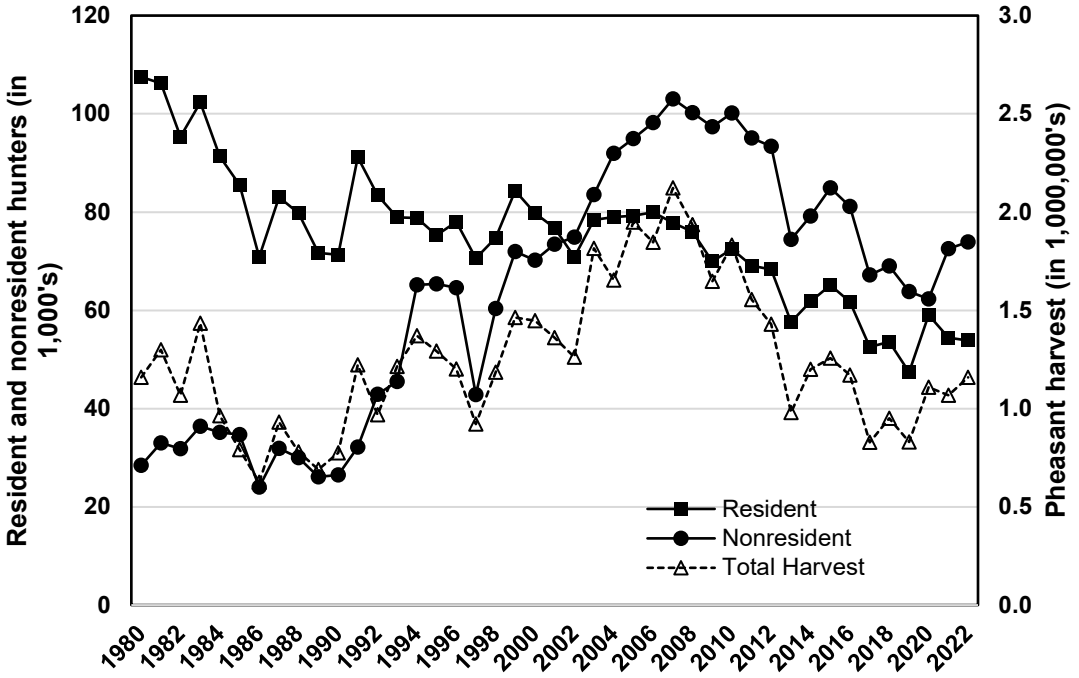


Figure 1. Total pheasant harvest and resident and nonresident hunters, 1980−2022.

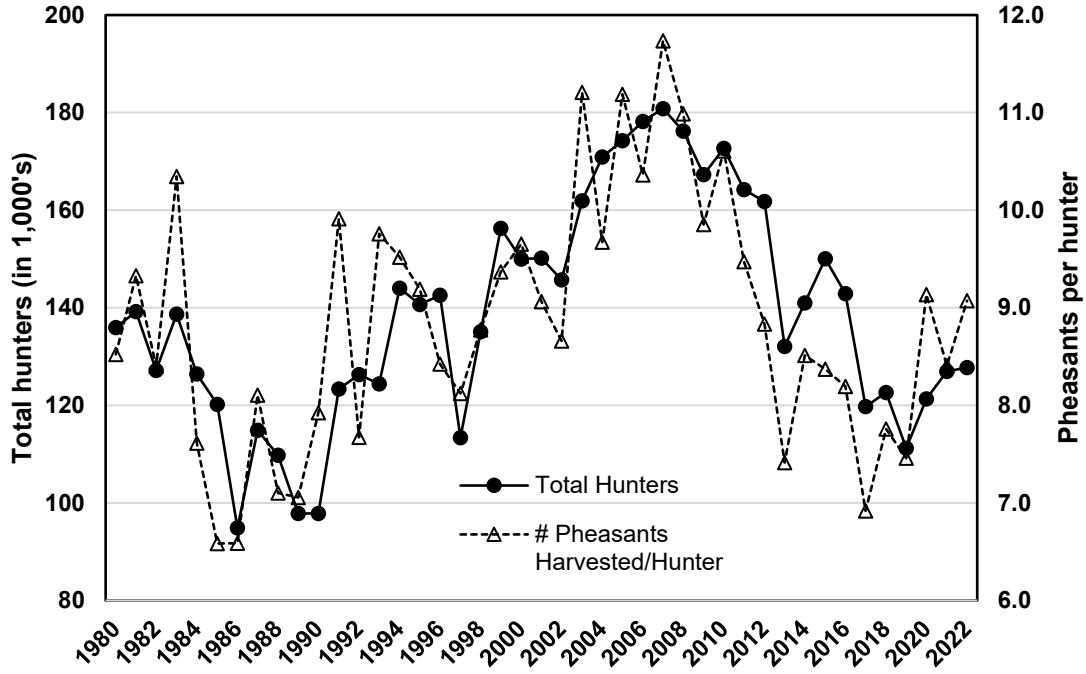


Figure 2. Total pheasant hunters and pheasants harvested per hunter, 1980−2022.

Table 1. Statewide totals for cost-share and incentive project types delivered by South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks' Private Lands Habitat Biologists, 2020−2023. Wetland enhancements and woody cover project types are measured by the total number of projects. Grassland restoration is measured by the number of acres restored. Food plot is measured by the number individual of food plot cooperators.

Project type	2020	2021	2022	2023	Average[a]
Wetland enhancement	2	3	1	10	4
Grassland restoration	1461	328	370	1331	873
Food plot	940	1019	933	907	950
Woody cover	54	41	31	41	42

[a] Rounded to nearest value

SECOND CENTURY INITIATIVE

Pheasant hunting is a major economic source for South Dakota, as well as a significant contributor to tourism. Revenue from pheasant hunting makes a difference in many rural communities for families and small businesses. The heritage associated with pheasant hunting is deeply engrained in South Dakota's culture. To ensure this heritage lives on, Governor Kristi Noem committed to conserving South Dakota's natural resources by proactively enhancing and establishing habitat through the Second Century Initiative, which launched in 2019.

This initiative is a strategy to increase resources for habitat management. As part of this plan, a $1 million state investment was implemented to expand habitat and pheasant hunting opportunities. The South Dakota Legislature approved this bill so these dollars can be used to leverage additional funds from private donations and federal conservation programs.

Additionally, on April 1, 2019, GFP launched the nest predator bounty program. The primary goals of this program were to increase trapping education and awareness, getting youth and families outside, and enhancing duck and pheasant nest success. Participation is open from March 1 to July 1 for resident youth under 18 and April 1 to July 1 for all South Dakota residents, or until the maximum annual payout of $500,000 is reached. Eligible species to be taken include raccoon, striped skunk, badger, opossum, and red fox. To date, over 240,000 nest predators have been removed and recorded during this program.

A Hunt for Habitat was also established under the Second Century Initiative to raise money for habitat efforts across South Dakota through raffle licenses. To learn more, visit https://gfp.sd.gov/hunt-for-habitat/. A crowdsourcing effort for habitat solutions launched in February 2019 and sparked a conversation that led to over 750 emails and an online dialogue that had over 300 group members thinking, talking, and exploring habitat solutions.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

Objective 1: Provide hunting access to quality pheasant habitat on public and private lands.

Strategies:

1.1 By 2026, develop a web-based tool to inform interested hunters on harvest and public land availability to better inform hunters of potential pheasant hunting locations.

1.2 Annually lease an additional 5,000 acres of private land for public hunting to provide high quality pheasant hunting opportunities through the James River Watershed CREP, Big Sioux Watershed CREP, or the Walk-in Area program.

1.2.1 Provide financial commitment to the 82,000 acres enrolled in the James River Watershed CREP and utilize funding sources as they become available to enroll the project goal of 100,000 acres.

1.2.2 Provide financial commitment to the project goal of 25,000 acres to be enrolled in the Big Sioux River Watershed CREP.

Objective 2: Promote the establishment, restoration, and enhancement of high-quality habitats critical for pheasants on state-owned Game Production Areas (GPAs).

Strategies:

2.1 Where pheasants are the primary habitat management species, best management practices for pheasant habitat management (page *XX* in the Management of Pheasants in South Dakota document) will be used with discretion to guide development and updates of GPA management plans within fiscal, biological, and land use constraints.

2.2 Evaluate and improve existing woody habitat design on GPAs. Adjust woody habitat accordingly to improve overall winter habitat according to best management practices for pheasant habitat management (page *XX* in the Management of Pheasants in South Dakota document).

2.2.1 Renovate existing woody habitat deemed appropriate in size and configuration with the addition of low growing tree or shrub rows to improve thermal cover.

2.2.2 Replace existing woody habitat that does not meet the appropriate best habitat management criteria, with a high diversity grass and forb planting or a new woody habitat planting that meets best habitat management criteria.

2.3 Evaluate and improve current nesting and brood rearing design on GPAs, while striving for large (> 40 acres) unfragmented blocks of grassland.

2.3.1 During grassland restorations, use grassland management techniques that promote diversity of grassland species.

2.3.2 When establishing grassland habitat, use diverse seed mixes considering fiscal and logistical constraints.

2.4 Evaluate existing food plot design and landscape position to optimize pheasant survival and production relative to adjacent nesting cover.

2.4.1 Replace food plots in undesirable locations with high diversity grass and forb plantings to function as brood habitat.
2.4.2 Explore the utility of second-year food plots in locations with lower pheasant and deer use.

2.5 Maintain existing partnership with Habitat Forever/Pheasants Forever to fund the appropriate level of habitat specialist positions to conduct habitat work on GPAs.

2.6. Foster relationships with adjacent landowners and local Conservation Districts to assist with habitat renovation, maintenance, and establishment on GPAs.

Objective 3: Protect and enhance pheasant habitat on private lands.

Strategies:

3.1 Continue to support the Second Century Initiative to promote pheasant management and raise funds for the enhancement and restoration of pheasant habitat.

3.2 Strive for at least 1 million acres of undisturbed CRP grassland habitat on private lands in South Dakota through the duration of this action plan.

3.2.1 GFP Private Lands Biologists will provide technical assistance to landowners interested in new and re-enrollment CRP options while also providing technical assistance to current CRP participants for management options of existing contracts that benefit pheasant habitat.
3.2.2 Continue to advocate for the strategic use of existing and new continuous CRP practices that provide quality pheasant nesting habitat and/or establish/maintain adequate thermal cover to improve winter survival.

3.3 Double the previous 4-year average to annually complete eight wetland restorations/creations through the department cost-share programs to provide dense emergent vegetation for winter cover habitat.

3.4 Increase the previous 4-year average by 35% to annually restore 1,200 acres of grassland habitat through department cost-share programs while also providing technical and financial assistance for proper grassland management.

3.5 Increase the previous 4-year average by 150 cooperators to annually strive for at least 1,100 Food Plot Program cooperators.

3.5.1 Work with existing cooperators on proper food plot design and landscape position that optimize pheasant survival and production.
3.5.2 Provide education and outreach on the utility, proper size, and location of food plots through various media outlets.

3.6 Increase the previous 4-year average by 55% to annually strive for at least 65 Woody Habitat Program cooperators.

3.6.1 Provide education and outreach on the utility, proper size, and location of woody habitat relative to other winter cover sources and nesting/brood rearing habitat through various media outlets.

3.6.2 Focus on supplementing the current woody conservation practice Field Windbreak Establishment (CP5A) and renovating shelterbelts outside of Conservation Reserve Program practices by providing technical and financial assistance to add additional and/or replacement rows of woody cover while meeting GFP's Woody Habitat Program Guidelines.

3.7 Annually work with Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologists, local United States Department of Agriculture offices, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and other partners to promote and deliver habitat cost-share programs and voluntary wetland and grassland easements in South Dakota.

3.7.1 When appropriate, provide pheasant habitat management training to willing conservation groups and partners for habitat cost-share programs.

Objective 4: Use and improve current population, harvest, and public opinion surveys to monitor population trends, economic impact of pheasant hunting, harvest levels, and hunter satisfaction.

Strategies:

4.1 Annually conduct and summarize hunter harvest surveys to project pheasant harvest, number of pheasant hunters, economic impact at a county level, and hunter satisfaction.

4.2 By 2028, improve existing population monitoring programs to develop survey methods to inform biologists on population status, reproductive success, and relative densities of pheasant populations. Use this information to develop an annual fall hunting forecast using a science-based approach while utilizing staff's technical expertise of pheasant reproductive ecology.

SOUTH DAKOTA
WHITE-TAILED AND MULE DEER
ACTION PLAN *2024-2028*

DRAFT

South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks
Pierre, South Dakota

Wildlife Division Report 2024-01

February 2024

All text and data contained within this document are subject to revision for corrections, updates, and data analyses.

A supportive document to this action plan, the "South Dakota White-tailed Deer and Mule Deer Management Plan, 2017-2023", provides a historical background, research, management surveys and monitoring, challenges and opportunities, and citizen involvement related to deer and can be found at https://gfp.sd.gov/management-plans/. Additionally, biennial population status updates for deer in South Dakota are available at https://gfp.sd.gov/deer/ under "Related Documents".

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This action plan is a product of substantial discussion, evaluation, and input from many wildlife professionals, constituents, and the 2023-24 South Dakota Deer Stakeholder Group. In addition, comments and suggestions received from private landowners, hunters, and those who recognize the value of deer and their associated habitats were also considered.

Action Plan Coordinator – Andy Lindbloom, South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP).

GFP Deer Action Plan Team that assisted with plan writing, data review and analyses, critical reviews and/or edits – Nathan Baker, Byron Buckley, Stephanie Buckley, Steve Griffin, Trenton Haffley, John Kanta, Julie Lindstrom, Andrew Norton, Dan Sternhagen, and Lauren Wiechmann.

Those who served on the South Dakota Deer Stakeholder Group during this planning process included: Representative Jessica Bahmuller (SD Legislator), Travis Bies (GFP Commissioner), Justin Broughton (South Dakota Bowhunter's, Inc.), Paul Coughlin (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), Dave Eichstadt (Beadle County Sportsmen's Club), Brenda Forman (South Dakota Ag Unity), Gordon Heber (East River landowner), John Hemmingstad (East River Landowner), Cody Hodson (Black Hills Sportsmen's Club), Megan Howell (South Dakota Wildlife Federation), Josh Larson (East River landowner/Sportsman), Ronn McDaniel (Sportsman), Valerie McKean (U.S. Bureau of Land Management), Dave Niemi (West River landowner), Casey Nordine (Mule Deer Foundation), Senator Herman Otten (SD Legislator), Jerry Petik (West River landowner), Dan Rhykus (East River landowner), Russ Roberts (Landowner and Outfitter Alliance), Todd Russell (U.S. Forest Service, Black Hills National Forest), Jim Scull (West River landowner/South Dakota Youth Hunting Adventures), Dean Siem (Dakota Sportsmen's Club), Matt Skjodal (West River landowner), Chuck Spring (GFP Commissioner), Dan Svingen (U.S. Forest Service, Ft. Pierre National Grasslands), Cheyenne Tant (South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources), Andy Vandel (High Plains Wildlife Association), and Robert Whitmyre (GFP Commissioner).

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INTRODUCTION

South Dakota's diverse landscapes of grassland, wetland, cropland, and timbered areas host white-tailed deer (*Odocoileous virginianus*) across the entire state and mule deer (*Odocoileous hemionus*) primarily adjacent to and west of the Missouri River breaks. Deer hunting is a popular outdoor activity for many sportsmen and women in South Dakota. Approximately 62,800 residents and 8,700 non-residents hunted deer in 2022, and hunting remains the number one tool for managing deer populations across South Dakota. South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) staff develop harvest strategies to ensure sustainability of each deer species and its habitat while maintaining populations at levels compatible with human activity and land use.

Involving the public in the development of the *"South Dakota White-tailed and Mule Deer Action Plan, 2024-2028"* has been a high priority of GFP. Numerous opinions and suggestions have been received, and all were carefully considered in identifying the action plan objectives and strategies. Multiple avenues for involvement and outreach were used to engage the public at various stages of plan development and to ensure opportunities for participation were accessible to all citizens. In 2023, GFP conducted a public opinion survey of South Dakota landowners and hunters to collect and evaluate opinions on numerous topics related to deer management. GFP also put together a South Dakota Deer Stakeholder Group, which included representation from deer hunters, private landowners, agricultural interests, commercial hunting interests, legislators, GFP commissioners, and conservation organizations. This group met multiple times to discuss many topics and issues related to deer management in South Dakota.

The "*South Dakota White-tailed and Mule Deer Action Plan, 2024-2028*" will serve as the guiding document for decision-making and implementation of actions to ensure deer populations and their habitats are managed appropriately, addressing both biological and social tolerances, while considering the needs of all stakeholders. This action plan will be formally evaluated every four years, however, updates may occur more frequently, as needed. Additional information regarding deer management, research, and history can be found in the *South Dakota White-tailed Deer and Mule Deer Management Plan, 2017-2023" at https://gfp.sd.gov/UserDocs/nav/deer-mgmnt.pdf.*

POPULATION MONITORING

White-tailed and mule deer herds are monitored frequently across their range in South Dakota. Survey efforts are completed to assess herd status and predict population trends in 8 data analysis units (DAUs) for mule deer and 11 DAUs for white-tailed deer (Figure 1). A DAU is an aggregate of management units that serves as representation of a similar population at a large geographic extent, but potentially large amounts of heterogeneity may exist in deer abundance within a DAU. GFP currently conducts harvest surveys, abundance surveys, survival monitoring, herd composition surveys, disease monitoring, winter severity evaluation, and population

modeling to assess deer populations. For the latest survey data and population updates, see GFP's Biennial Status Updates (Lindbloom et al. 2023) at https://gfp.sd.gov/deer/ under "Related Documents".

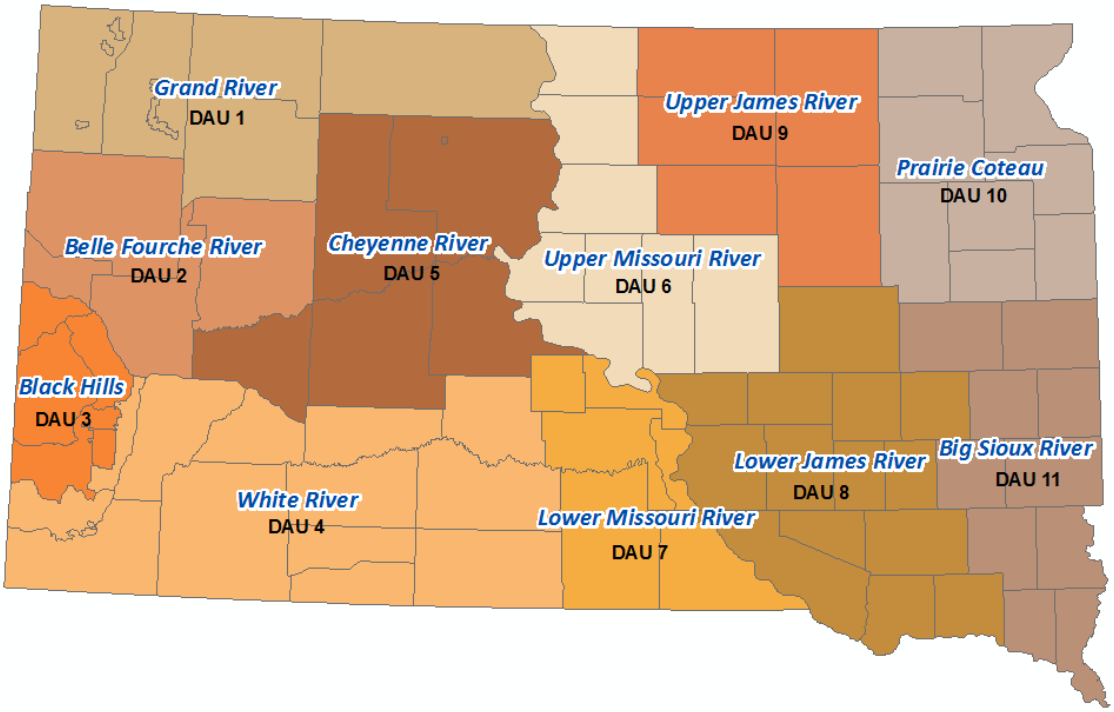


Figure 1. Data Analysis Units (DAUs) for deer management in South Dakota.

Harvest Surveys

Surveys are used to estimate hunter harvest of both mule deer and white-tailed deer. All hunters with a valid email address are surveyed each year using an electronic survey. Information from respondents is used to estimate total harvest by species, age, and sex, and harvest success of respondents is assumed to be similar to nonrespondents. GFP staff provide multiple survey reminders to improve response rates and ensure reliable harvest estimates. Harvest by season is estimated at the deer management unit scale.

Abundance surveys

Abundance surveys provide important data to manage both white-tailed and mule deer populations in South Dakota. GFP currently uses 2 methods (aerial surveys and spotlight road surveys) to estimate abundance in certain areas within the state. Aerial surveys are an efficient way to estimate deer abundance. However, few surveys accurately count all animals, due mainly to visibility biases (i.e., unobserved animals). One approach used to correct for visibility bias of ungulate populations are sightability models (Samuel et al. 1987). GFP has developed a sightability model that is valid for surveying white-tailed deer in most habitats found in eastern

South Dakota (Robling 2011). Aerial surveys are conducted at the DAU level on a scheduled rotation for DAUs 9 and 10 east of the Missouri River, when snow conditions exist.

Spotlight road surveys are conducted within the boundaries of the Black Hills, and distance sampling methods are used to estimate detection rates and abundance for white-tailed deer (Cudmore 2017). Sixty transect routes have been selected by General Randomized Tessellation Stratified sampling (Stevens and Olsen 2004), with transect lengths varying from 3.5 km to 16 km. Variability and low precision make interpretation of road surveys challenging, but results suggest that white-tailed deer are below the objective established for the Black Hills of 70,000.

Survival Monitoring

Survival rates aid in estimating deer abundance and trend as the result of changes in winter conditions, disease outbreaks, or harvest strategies. Since 2013, over 4,600 deer have been radio-collared to evaluate survival in South Dakota for both sexes and all age classes of white-tailed and mule deer. GFP staff are currently monitoring previously GPS-collared mule deer and white-tailed deer in DAU 1. Survival studies have been instrumental in providing area specific biological data for evaluating deer populations and management options.

Herd Compositions Surveys

Pre-hunting season herd composition ground surveys are completed by driving roads or hiking in areas of known deer concentrations in September and October. All deer herds that are observed in their entirety are classified to numbers of fawns, adult does, and adult bucks. A minimum sample size of 200-400 independent group observations per deer species per DAU is currently obtained to ensure sufficient precision in herd composition estimates. Quantifying deer recruitment for each DAU is critical to estimate growth rates and determine appropriate license allocation for deer herds throughout the variable landscapes of South Dakota.

Disease Monitoring

Numerous diseases and parasites can impact individual white-tailed and mule deer in South Dakota; however, Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) and Hemorrhagic Disease are the primary diseases that may affect populations and herd growth. The South Dakota Chronic Wasting Disease Action Plan was approved by the GFP Commission in 2019 and most recently updated in 2023 (https://gfp.sd.gov/userdocs/docs/sd_cwd_action_plan_south_dakota_june_2023.pdf).

Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease and Blue Tongue disease (collectively called hemorrhagic disease) may cause substantial but usually localized mortalities of ungulates in South Dakota. White-tailed deer are primarily affected by these viruses, but GFP has documented mortalities in other ungulate species. When reported losses from hemorrhagic disease are substantial, GFP may remove leftover tags in affected units and reduce future license allocation. Hunters may also return deer licenses before the hunting season begins if they feel disease has negatively affected their opportunity to harvest a deer.

Winter Severity Evaluation

Winter severity is an important metric which can impact survival of white-tailed and mule deer populations (Verme 1968). Weather data are obtained through an annual data request via the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Program R, a software programming package (R Core Team 2015), is used to extrapolate weather data across all deer units using an inverse distance weighted interpolation function. In addition, GFP collects and maintains a database of deer mortalities reported to staff from the public during hard winters. The combination of weather and mortality data provide a relative assessment of overwinter mortalities and represent an approximate spatial distribution of where those losses occur.

Population Modeling

Harvest-based population models are used to reconstruct the previous year's pre-hunting season population and project abundance to future years for each DAU while considering various harvest management strategies for each management unit (Norton et al. 2021). Future antlerless harvest strategies are manipulated to achieve the desired population growth rates based on population projection models. The projected (model generated) and objective growth rates are compared and future antlerless harvest strategies are manipulated to achieve the desired growth rates derived from the DAU population objective. In the population projection model, antlerless harvest is assumed to be additive, and the number of antlerless deer added or removed from the population is calculated at the DAU level and then distributed to the unit level in accordance with the defined unit objective (increase or decrease lambda). Three-year average harvest success rates are calculated for all previously used license types within the management unit and license combinations needed to achieve unit level antlerless harvest recommendations are selected for future harvest season license recommendations. This process is repeated for all white-tailed and mule deer firearm management units across the state.

WILDLIFE DAMAGE AND HABITAT MANAGEMENT

GFP understands that cooperative partnerships with private landowners are an essential component to deer management and that private lands serve an important role regarding deer management in South Dakota. With about 80% of the state being held in private ownership, GFP relies heavily on private land for wildlife production and hunting access. Buckley (2024) reported that 50% of responding landowners who were surveyed indicated that they experienced deer damage within the past year. The ability to effectively address deer depredation (i.e., impacts on crops, trees, landscaping, and land used for livestock production) fluctuates annually because of weather events (e.g., severe winters and deep snow), deer population levels, and changes that occur to deer habitat (e.g., habitat loss, human encroachment, and agricultural development).

Primary management techniques include loaner panels to construct temporary stackyards around stored livestock food sources, cost share assistance with permanent stackyards and protective fencing, and direct assistance with hazing deer away from problem areas and other

damage concerns. Over the past 10 years, GFP has spent considerable resources (nearly $5 million) providing long-term solutions (i.e., protective stackyards and panels which permanently protect hay and stored-feed supplies) to address deer damage. GFP is continually striving to find the balancing-point between recreational opportunities and impacts on private lands caused by deer. While many of GFP's damage abatement techniques have proven successful over the last 20 years, deer depredation and the associated conflicts will continue to challenge landowners and GFP. GFP acknowledges that its programs will not be able to completely resolve all issues regarding deer depredation; however, GFP has a proven history of working with private landowners and is committed to cooperatively working with private landowners to implement reasonable solutions to address most concerns.

In addition to direct mitigation of deer damage as described above, a primary GFP priority is habitat management which proactively mitigates deer damage. Specifically, GFP strives to provide adequate deer habitat on public and private lands to reduce damage impacts during severe winters. Some of these strategies include providing adequate winter forage and thermal cover to reduce reliance of deer consuming stored feed, standing crops, and generally aggregating near feed lots and farmyards where anthropogenic food sources are abundant. Woody habitat provides an ideal source of thermal cover, but more importantly it provides a source of browse when persistent, deep snow makes waste grain, forbs, and grasses inaccessible. In addition, strategically placed food plots can provide an alternative food source during severe winters.

CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT AND OUTREACH

Understanding public attitudes is important since they can influence and predict behavior, and the more specific the attitude is toward a certain behavior (i.e., same target, context, action, and time) the stronger the relation between attitude and behavior (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980, Fishbein and Manfredo 2002, Vaske 2008). As part of developing this deer action plan, and as a first step in identifying the interests and needs of South Dakota landowners and hunters, GFP conducted comprehensive opinion surveys in the fall of 2023 (final report in progress).

Hunters were asked to report their perceptions of the white-tailed deer and mule deer populations in the units they hunted in the most. Forty-three percent of hunters indicated the white-tailed deer population was *just about right.* Most hunters indicated the mule deer population in the unit they hunted the most was either *far too few* (32%) or *slightly too few* (32%). Thirty-eight percent of landowners reported that the white-tailed deer population in the unit they owned property in was *just about right.* Additionally, the largest percentage of landowners had no opinion of the mule deer population in the unit where they owned property (34%), followed by *far too few* (26%).

Landowners reported on the positive and negative aspects of deer in South Dakota. Landowners agreed with the benefits of deer. Sixty-eight percent agreed that having a healthy self-sustaining population of deer in South Dakota is important to them. Fifty-one percent

agreed the presence of deer near their property improves their quality of life. Fifty-five percent agreed deer support local economies through hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities. Landowners also expressed concerns about the potential risks of deer in South Dakota. Seventy percent agreed that they worry about deer-vehicle collisions. Forty percent agreed deer damage to tree plantings, landscaping, and gardens reduced their quality of life. Forty-five percent agreed deer damage to private feed supplies and agricultural crops threatens people's livelihoods.

Furthermore, half of landowners experienced crop or property damage caused by deer (50%). Respondents were asked to rate the damage they experienced on a Likert scale (1 = Not a problem, 4 = Major problem). However, for those who experienced damage, they rated the damage as only a minor problem (i.e., crop damage/consumption [Mean = 2.44], fence damage [Mean = 2.09]) or a moderate problem (i.e., livestock feed damage/consumption [Mean = 2.45], tree damage [Mean = 2.46]).

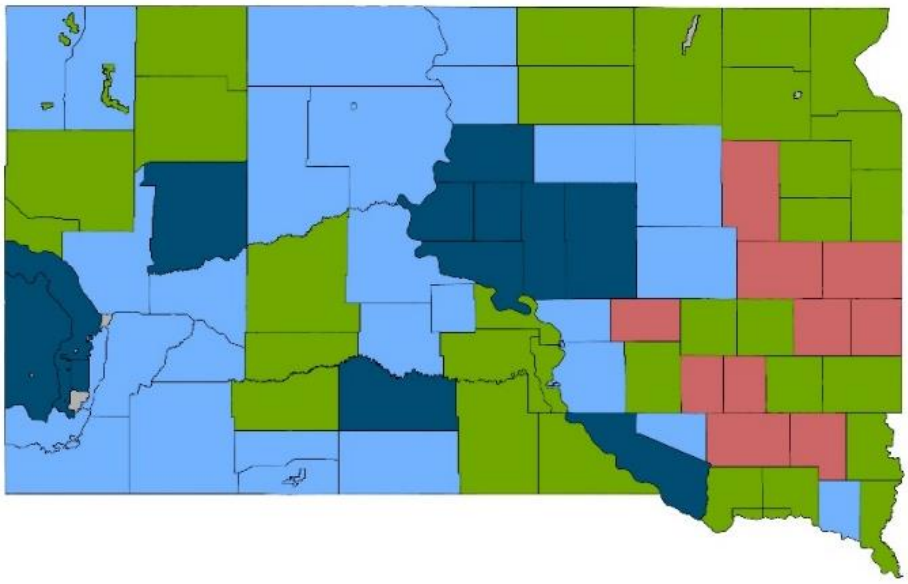
Respondents were asked whether they generally supported limiting the total number of deer licenses a hunter can obtain to increase the chance an individual hunter can obtain their preferred license. Forty-six percent of landowners and 53% of hunters were supportive. Respondents were also asked how strongly they would support or oppose a process that would increase hunters' chances of getting at least one buck deer license per year, knowing it would limit some hunters' chances of getting multiple buck licenses in a year. Sixty-nine percent of hunters and 58% of landowners were supportive.

POPULATION OBJECTIVES

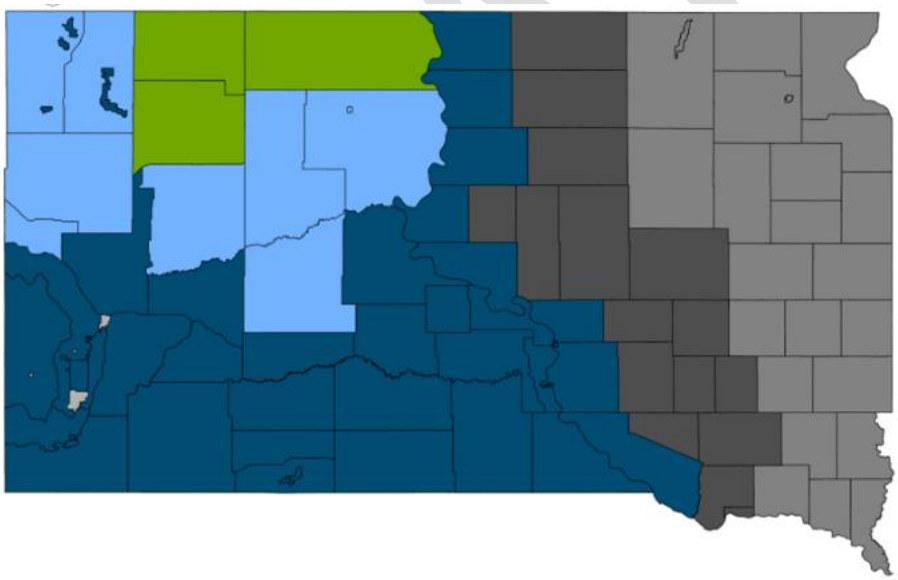
Population objectives (increase, maintain, or decrease) for each firearm deer hunting unit are set every 2 years when season recommendations are brought forward to the GFP commission (Figure 2). Deer population objectives for each unit are based on population assessments, habitat conditions, and social considerations.

Within the Black Hills DAU, GFP has estimated white-tailed deer abundance for multiple years and therefore was able to define a pre-season abundance objective of 70,000 (range 65,000-75,000) white-tailed deer. Since hunter satisfaction is strongly correlated with hunter success, GFP has established minimum success thresholds for firearm licenses containing "any deer" or "any whitetail" firearm tags. Furthermore, in Limited Access Units, harvest must meet either hunter success or license density thresholds (see objectives and strategies section).

White-tailed Deer



Mule Deer



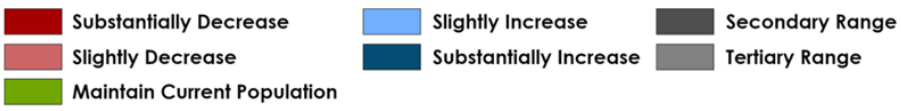


Figure 2. Population objectives for white-tailed and mule deer, 2023-24. Areas in gray are outside the primary range of the species and have limited suitable habitat.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

Objective 1: Manage for biologically and socially acceptable white-tailed and mule deer populations in each firearm deer management unit within South Dakota.

a) Gather hunter input on white-tailed and mule deer population unit objectives.
   - Annually survey hunters to assess objectives as desired by hunters.
b) Gather input from landowners and the general public on white-tailed and mule deer population unit objectives.
   - Evaluate current database for contacts, sampling strategies, and costs needed to collect data at the unit level.
   - Biennially survey landowners and the general public to further evaluate deer populations, objectives, management needs, and social tolerance.
c) Survey all hunters to estimate annual white-tailed and mule deer harvest statistics.
d) Annually conduct and assess fall white-tailed and mule deer herd composition surveys.
e) Assess and monitor white-tailed deer abundance by completing aerial surveys in DAUs 9 and 10 at least every six years and spotlight surveys annually in DAU 3.
f) Monitor and assess the impacts of severe winter and drought conditions on deer populations.
g) Monitor and evaluate impact of disease to white-tailed and mule deer herds.
h) Further evaluate the utility of trail camera surveys in the Black Hills and other appropriate areas to estimate abundance and population parameters of mule and white-tailed deer.
i) Further assess deer-vehicle collision data from SD Department of Transportation to evaluate deer trends and coordinate potential mitigation strategies.
j) Further evaluate methods to reliably monitor changes in deer abundance.

Objective 2: Manage hunting opportunity fairly and equitably among various user groups and interests within South Dakota.

a) Modify and adopt future hunting season structure as needed to maximize hunting opportunity for unique hunters and minimize regulation complexity.
b) In Custer State Park, “Any whitetail” licenses will be set at 1% of the current CSP white-tailed deer population estimate (calculated as CSP acreage x Black Hills white-tailed deer density). No more than 50 “any whitetail” licenses will be issued in any year. “Any deer” licenses will be set at 1% of the current Black Hills Type 01 license allocation.

c) Manage Limited Access Units (27L and 35L) and CSP for a quality hunting experience by using the following established thresholds:
   - Maintain a minimum 1st tag harvest success of 75% (3-year average) for licenses containing "any deer" or "any whitetail" firearm tags; or
   - Maintain firearm license densities no greater than 1.5 licenses/square mile for "any deer" licenses and no greater than 2.5 licenses/square mile for "any whitetail" licenses.

d) Manage for a minimum 1st tag harvest success (3-year average) for licenses containing "any deer" or "any whitetail" as follows:
   - 60% in the Black Hills firearm deer season
   - 60% in each West River firearm deer season unit
   - 50% in each East River and National Wildlife Refuge firearm deer season unit
   - 40% (3-year average) for muzzleloader licenses containing "any deer" or "any whitetail" tags in each National Wildlife Refuge deer hunting unit.

e) Archery and muzzleloader antlerless harvest opportunities will be managed as follows:
   - If 0-50 firearm antlerless tags are offered – the management unit may or may not be open to archery and muzzleloader antlerless-only white-tailed deer hunting.
   - If >50 firearm antlerless tags are offered – the management unit will be open to archery and muzzleloader antlerless-only white-tailed deer hunting.

f) Other antlerless harvest opportunities will be managed as follows:
   - Antlerless-only firearm tags may be used during late seasons in units with > 0 firearm antlerless licenses offered.
   - Landowner free antlerless-only tags available in units with > 0 firearm antlerless licenses offered.
   - Youth/Mentor/Apprentice antlerless-only tags – always available, but unit boundaries for any deer and white-tailed deer only tags may be changed based on population growth objectives.

g) Manage mule deer populations according to habitat available and range designation (see Figure 2 objectives map for delineation):
   - Primary range – Population objectives established, continuous population monitoring, and all license types available to meet management needs.
   - Secondary range – No established objectives, no population monitoring (except harvest), and antlerless license types limited to Type 13 (antlerless-only whitetail). No restrictions on antlered license types.
   - Tertiary range – No established objectives, no population monitoring (except harvest), and license types limited to Type 13 (antlerless-only whitetail) and Type 01 (any deer) for antlered any deer.

Objective 3: Cooperatively work with private landowners to resolve white-tailed and mule deer depredation to growing crops, stored-feed supplies, trees, and private property.

a) Continue to respond to all white-tailed and mule deer depredation concerns on private land in a timely manner.
b) Encourage the enrollment of willing landowners that are experiencing chronic deer depredation issues into Walk-In Area and Controlled Hunting Access Programs to allow public hunting access.
c) Utilize deer depredation pool hunts when warranted to address white-tailed and mule deer depredation concerns.
d) Expand hunting opportunities where/when possible, to address white-tailed and mule deer depredation on private lands.
e) Evaluate additional depredation management strategies to increase acceptance of deer population goals.

Objective 4: Cooperatively work with private landowners and public land managers to create, enhance, restore, and protect white-tailed and mule deer habitat.

a) Annually strive for at least 65 Woody Habitat Program cooperators.
b) Promote the establishment, restoration, and enhancement of high-quality woody habitats critical for deer on private lands, state-owned Game Production Areas (GPAs), and other public lands.
c) Annually strive for at least 10 cooperative projects of riparian habitat development or restoration.
d) Annually strive for at least 5 hardwood release projects primarily in the Black Hills.
e) Develop program options to restore deer forage and security cover in shrub steppe habitats through plantings and management assistance.
    - Investigate and identify forb and browse enhancement options that are specific to each ecoregion.
f) Annually strive for at least 1,100 Food Plot Program cooperators.
    - Promote food plots for big game species utilizing west river and east river GFP seed mixes.
g) Support grassland and wetland establishment or restoration that may provide benefits to white-tailed and mule deer.

Objective 5: Cooperatively work with private landowners and public land managers to provide and enhance hunting access for white-tailed and mule deer.

a) Annually lease an additional 5,000 acres of private land for deer hunting opportunities through the James River Watershed CREP, Big Sioux River Watershed CREP, Controlled Hunting Access Program, or the Walk-in Area program.

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SOUTH DAKOTA BOBCAT MANAGEMENT PLAN, 2024–2028

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF GAME, FISH AND PARKS
PIERRE, SOUTH DAKOTA

WILDLIFE DIVISION REPORT 2024–01

FEBRUARY 2024

This document is for general, strategic guidance for the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) and serves to identify what we strive to accomplish related to bobcat management. This plan and related processes will emphasize working cooperatively with interested publics in both the planning process and the regular management activities related to bobcat management in South Dakota. This plan will be used by GFP staff and Commission on an annual basis and will be formally evaluated at least every 5 years. Plan updates and changes, however, may occur more frequently as needed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This plan is a product of substantial discussion and input from many wildlife professionals and the South Dakota public sector. In addition, those comments and suggestions received from private landowners, trappers, hunters, conservationists, and those who recognize the value of bobcats and their associated habitats were also considered.

Management Plan Coordinator – Chad Lehman, South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks (SDGFP).

SDGFP Bobcat Management Plan Team that assisted with plan writing, data review and analyses, critical reviews and/or edits to the South Dakota Bobcat Management Plan – Nathan Baker, Keith Fisk, Trenton Haffley, Julie Lindstrom, Brady Neiles, Andrew Norton, Kylie Sinclair, and Dan Sternhagen.

All text and data contained within this document are subject to revision for corrections, updates, and data analyses.

Those who served on the South Dakota Bobcat Stakeholder Group during this planning process included: Travis Bies (SDGFP Commissioner); Brenda Forman (Ag Unity); Zach Hunke (South Dakota Wildlife Federation); Vince Logue (South Dakota Western Fur Harvesters Association), Craig Parkurst (South Dakota Trappers Association); and Jeremy Wells (South Dakota Houndsmen Association).

Cover photo courtesy of Brady Neiles.

Recommended Citation:

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

BLM	Bureau of Land Management
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
CM	Centimeter
KG	Kilogram
NPS	National Park Service
GFP	South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks
SPR	Statistical Population Reconstruction
USFS	United States Forest Service

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) is an impressive predator that can hunt by stalking or ambush and can survive in a wide variety of different terrain and habitat. Their uncanny ability to get close to prey is remarkable and such behavior has been described in detail as a "hunting bed" or a lookout where they lay and wait for prey to walk by. This species is a member of the mesocarnivore guild in North America and plays a vital role in ecological communities through trophic cascades as well as nutrient and energy cycling within food webs. Trophic cascades can occur through population-level effects where predators prey on herbivores and consequently decrease the abundance of herbivores that may negatively impact certain plant communities. Bobcat population abundance and growth rates may be tied closely with prey availability and predator prey relationships.

This management plan provides important historical background and relevant biological information for the sustainable management of bobcats in South Dakota. Current bobcat research information, survey information, and relevant biological literature are presented, along with a thorough discussion of objectives and strategies to guide management of this important resource into the future. This plan is intended to guide managers and biologists over the next five years but should be considered a working document that will be amended as new biological and social data provide opportunities to improve management of the bobcat resource in South Dakota.

The following objectives have been identified for the successful management of bobcats: 1) Annually determine status of bobcat populations; 2) Bi-annually review and set bobcat management objectives and use harvest strategies to maximize sustainable recreational opportunity; 3) Maintain, manage, and protect existing bobcat habitat and prey base in South Dakota. Bobcats occur across a wide range of habitat types which makes it difficult to manage for specific habitats. Therefore, it would be more appropriate to manage for wild turkey (*Meleagrididae*) and lagomorph (e.g., eastern cottontail rabbit [*Sylvilagus floridanus*]) habitat needs as a primary prey base; 4) Continue to use science-based research and surveys to answer questions related to public attitudes towards bobcat management; and 5) Inform and educate the public on bobcat ecology, management, and research.

The "*South Dakota Bobcat Management Plan, 2024-2028*" will serve as the guiding document for decision making and implementation of actions to ensure bobcat populations and their habitats are managed appropriately. South Dakota Department of Game, Fish, and Parks (GFP) will work closely with United States Forest Service (USFS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), National Park Service (NPS), private landowners, and sportsmen and women to overcome challenges and take advantage of opportunities regarding the management of bobcats in South Dakota.

INTRODUCTION AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) is an impressive predator that can hunt by stalking or ambush. Their uncanny ability to get close to prey is remarkable and such behavior has been described in detail as a "hunting bed" or a lookout where they lay and wait for prey to walk by (Rollings 1945, Marshall and Jenkins 1966, McCord 1974). This amazing behavior was observed by researchers in the Black Hills where a radiomarked bobcat was waiting for a prairie dog to emerge for over 45 minutes before successfully capturing its prey (personal observation, GFP). This species is a member of the mesocarnivore guild in North America and plays a vital role in ecological communities through trophic cascades as well as nutrient and energy cycling within food webs (Lesmeister et al. 2015). Trophic cascades can occur through population-level effects where predators prey on herbivores and consequently decrease the abundance of herbivores that may negatively impact certain plant communities (Schmitz et al. 1997). Bobcat population abundance and growth rates may be tied closely with prey availability and predator prey relationships; undoubtably lagomorph (i.e., rabbits [*Sylvilagus* spp. and *Lepus* spp.]) abundance plays an important role in bobcat survival and reproduction (Anderson and Lovallo 2003).

In addition to its ecological value, the bobcat also has economic value as a prized furbearer species. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) was implemented in the mid-1970s. As pelts of other cat species listed in Appendix I became legally unattainable for commercial fur trade, the global demand for bobcat pelts intensified (Woolf and Hubert 1998). The concern for overharvest arose and the bobcat was listed in Appendix II in 1975, which forced adherent countries to demonstrate that international trade would not threaten the survival of the bobcat before permitting export of this species or its products to other adherent countries. Accordingly, state resource agencies were subject to federal review whereby they needed to demonstrate that harvest levels were not detrimental to bobcat populations (Rolley 1987, Woolf and Hubert 1998). Bobcat harvest peaked at over 86,000 in the United States in 1979-80 (Novak et al. 1987). Modern harvest records of bobcats in South Dakota date back to 1973 where annual statewide harvest has varied from just over 60 to just under 1,000 bobcats (Lehman et al. 2023).

Bobcats belong to the order Carnivora and family Felidae. The genus *Lynx* is considered to be of African origin and bobcats and lynx (*L. canadensis*) originated from a common ancestor (*L. issiodorensis*) in North America (Werdelin 1981). The oldest fossil remains of bobcats in North American date back to 2.5 million years ago (Anderson and Lovallo 2003). Perhaps competitive exclusion of the wide-spread bobcat prevented the range expansion of lynx into southern North America (Anderson and Lovallo 2003).

The bobcat is the most commonly distributed native felid in North America with 12 recognized subspecies (Fig. 1). It was extirpated in much of the Ohio Valley, upper Mississippi Valley, and southern Great Lakes region (Peterson and Downing 1952). A northward expansion of the bobcat range occurred after the clearing of mature conifer forests for agriculture purposes which also reduced the range of the lynx (Rolley 1987; Rollings 1945). The continued northern expansion of the bobcat is limited by deep snow (Litvaitis et al. 1986; Parker et al. 1983). The

bobcat has been reintroduced successfully in northwestern New Jersey (McCord and Cardoza 1982) and on Cumberland Island, Georgia (Diefenbach et al. 1994). In South Dakota, bobcats are distributed across the entire state but bobcats are more likely to occur in habitats with increased rugged terrain, greater upland grassland cover, and greater woody vegetation and these conditions are more common west of the Missouri River (Fig. 2; Mosby 2011). Harvest data follow this same trend as most bobcats are harvested west of the Missouri River with less harvest east of the Missouri River (Lehman et al. 2023).

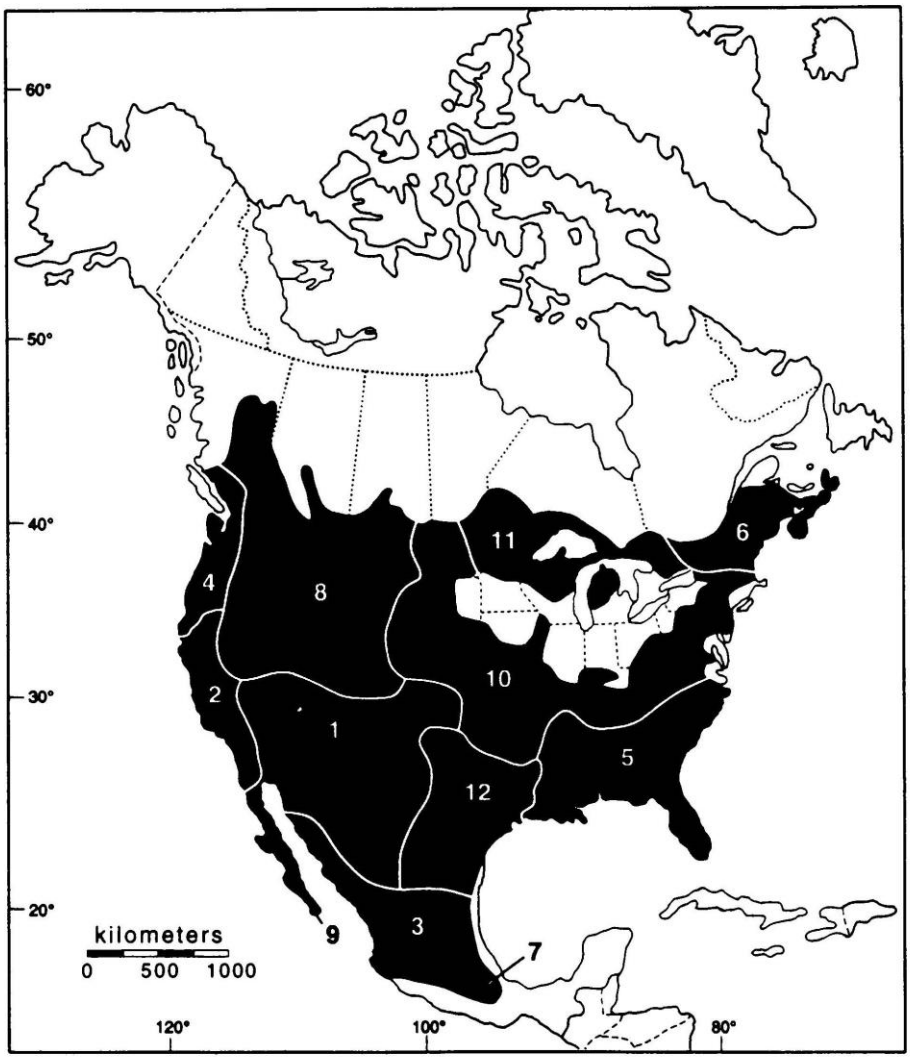

Figure 1. Distribution of bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) in North America. There are 12 recognized subspecies that have been identified as: 1, *L. r. baileyi*; 2, *L. r. californicus*; 3, *L. r. escuinapae;* 4, *L. r. fasciatus;* 5, *L. r. floridanus;* 6, *L. r. gigas;* 7, *L. r. oaxacensis;* 8, *L. r. pallescens;* 9, *L. r. peninsularis;* 10, *L. r. rufus;* 11, *L. r. superiorensis;* 12, *L. r. texensis* (Hall 1981, Larivière and Walton 1997).

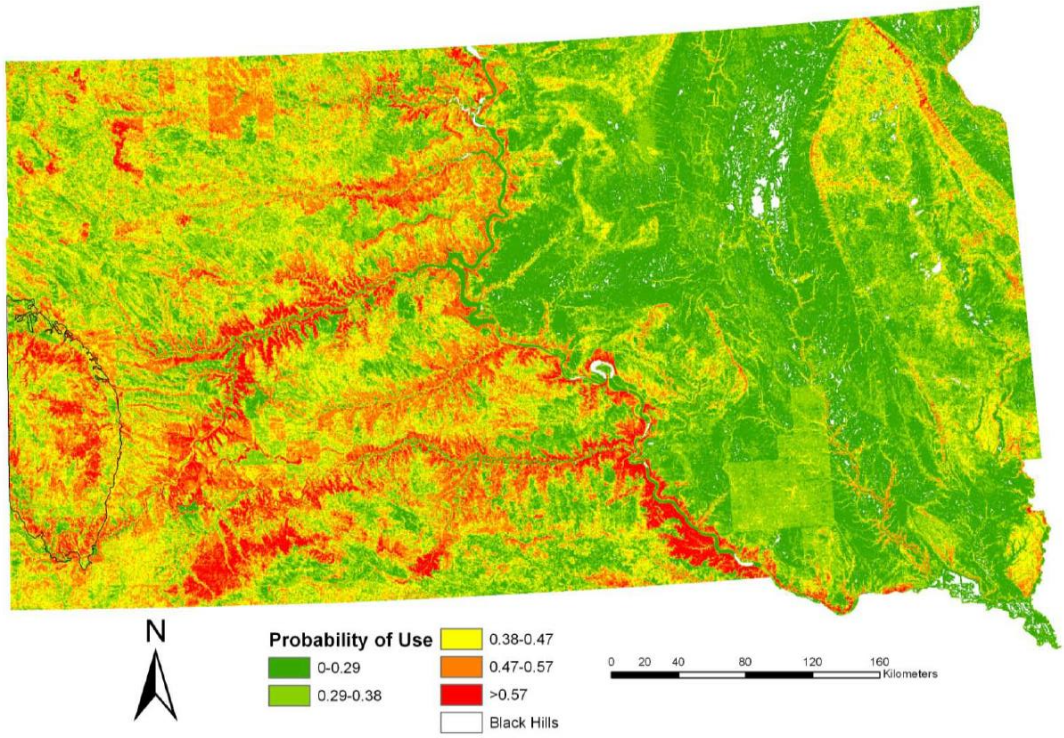

Figure 2. Bobcats have a higher probability of use in habitats with greater terrain ruggedness, greater upland grassland cover, and increased woody vegetation in South Dakota, USA (Mosby 2011). Harvest data track this same pattern with greater harvests west of the Missouri River (Lehman et al. 2023).

DESCRIPTION, BEHAVIOR, AND VITAL RATES

Physical characteristics differentiate the bobcat from the lynx with shorter ear tufts (<2.5 cm), lack of large furry pads, slightly longer tail (18-22% of length of head and body), and increased spots on the coat (Fig. 3; Banfield 1987, Hoffmeister 1989, Larivière and Walton 1997). Adult bobcat weights can vary considerably throughout their range but following Bergmann's rule, size typically increases with latitude and elevation (Sikes and Kennedy 1992). Adult males average 9.6 (range: 6.4-18.3) kg and females average 6.8 (range: 4.1-15.3) kg (Banfield 1987). An exceptional male was captured and radio-marked for research in Custer State Park that weighed 20.6 kg (45.4 lbs). Based on a literature search this is the largest bobcat ever radiomarked for research purposes (Anderson and Lovallo 2003). Several theories have been postulated related to larger male body size and pronounced sexual dimorphism. Bobcats have a polygynous mating system in which males compete for breeding of females and therefore natural selection may select for larger males being more successful at breeding females (Anderson and Lovallo 2003). Another hypothesis suggests dimorphism may reduce intraspecific competition among males and females for different-sized prey resources. Research from different areas of North America may support "niche partitioning theory" where

females forage on greater proportions of smaller prey items than males (Fritts and Sealander 1978, Knick et al. 1984, Litvaitis et al. 1984, Anderson and Lovallo 2003).

Figure 3. Male bobcat radiomarked for research in the northern Black Hills, South Dakota, USA.

Bobcats can reproduce their first year (9-12 months of age) but typically do not (Rolley 1985). Onset of sexual maturity may be closely tied with prey availability as the rate of yearling pregnancies fluctuating greatly with prey availability (Rolley 1985). Juvenile males are not sexually active their first year, but most males appear to be capable of breeding their second year (Saunders 1961, Crowe 1975).

Breeding can occur anytime during the year but typically peaks in February and March (Duke 1954, Blankenship and Swank 1979, Parker and Smith 1983). Timing of the breeding may vary according to latitude, altitude, climate, and prey availability (McCord and Cardoza 1982). Gestation has been observed from 62 to 70 days (Mehrer 1975, Stys and Leopold 1993). In the Black Hills parturition, or birthing, ranged from April 23 through May 28 and the median date of parturition was May 12 over a 2-year study from 2020-21 (unpublished data, West Virginia University). Pregnancy rates and litter size can vary related to age, availability of prey, or other density-dependent factors (Anderson and Lovallo 2003). In Idaho, pregnancy rates correlated greatly with jackrabbit abundance from a high of 1.00 to a low of 0.13 for adult females (Knick 1990). In this same Idaho study, no yearling females ever produced kittens (Knick 1990). Pregnancy rates in the Black Hills of South Dakota in 2020 was 0.56 and was more than twice as great compared to 2021 (0.26; Morrison 2022). One study hypothesized density-dependence occurred with pregnancy rates when rates were cut in half during high bobcat abundance (Lembeck and Gould 1979). A survey of 21 bobcat studies indicated average litter size was 2.7 and varied from 1.7 to 3.6 kittens/litter (Anderson 1987). Yearling females typically produce

smaller litter sizes than adults (Anderson 1987). Average litter size for bobcats in the Black Hills of South Dakota was 2.11 (Morrison 2022).

Kittens are born blind and completely reliant upon their mothers for survival (Pollack 1950, Stys and Leopold 1993). Kittens weigh 150-340 g and open their eyes sometime after 9 days (Figure 4; Pollack 1950, Stys and Leopold 1993). The first deciduous teeth appear after 11 days and are fully erupted around 9 weeks; permanent teeth appear at 16-19 weeks and are fully developed at 34 weeks (Jackson et al. 1988). Kittens first leave the safety of the den after 33 days of life and start consuming solid food during that time (Stys and Leopold 1993). Bobcat kittens begin

Figure 4. Bobcat kittens radiomarked for research in the Black Hills, South Dakota, USA.

moving around with their mothers at 3 months of age and will accompany her until the following breeding season (Bailey 1979). Unfortunately, there has been little research on bobcat kitten survival and information is severely limited. What information exists has been provided through life tables and varies from 0.18-0.71 (Crowe 1975, Blankenship and Swank 1979, Hoppe 1979). Prey abundance appears to strongly influence kitten survival and during years of low rabbit abundance no bobcat kittens survived in Idaho (Bailey 1974, Knick 1990). Based on studies with small sample sizes of radiomarked kittens there have been observed mortalities from malnutrition and predation (Zezulak 1981, Blackwell et al. 1991); however, lack of telemetry studies on kittens with greater samples sizes have limited inferences for cause-specific mortality. Kitten survival in the Black Hills of South Dakota was 0.17, and most cause-specific mortality was from starvation (41%) and predation (38%) (Morrison 2022).

Annual survival of adult bobcats varies greatly and in unexploited populations can vary from 0.78-0.97 under natural conditions without hunting or trapping (Crowe 1975, Knick 1990, Chamberlain et al. 1999). When bobcats are moderately exploited survival rates generated from life tables were 0.67 in Wyoming (Crowe 1975), 0.60 in South Dakota (Fredrickson and Rice 1979), and 0.53 in Oklahoma (Rolley 1985). Life tables are not ideal for generating survival estimates and radiotelemetry data is more robust (Heisey and Fuller 1985). In South Dakota, from 2006-2010, annual survival of radiomarked adult bobcats was 0.54 for populations from along the Missouri River to the Black Hills combined; most mortality was from hunting and trapping (n= 6), followed by unknown causes (n = 5; Mosby 2011). From 2013-2016, annual survival of radiomarked adult bobcats varied from 0.65-0.76 for bobcats from the prairie region of western South Dakota; cause-specific mortality was mostly hunting and trapping (n = 10), followed by infection (n = 2) and aggressive encounters with other bobcats (n = 2; Tycz 2016). In the Black Hills, from 2016-2023, annual survival of both adult (0.79) and yearling (0.77) females was high for a harvested population (Lehman et al. 2024). In the Black Hills, from 2016-2023, annual adult male survival has varied from 0.49-0.70 (Lehman and Nelson 2017, Lehman and Nelson 2018, Lehman et al. 2019, Lehman et al. 2020, Lehman et al. 2021, Lehman et al. 2022, Lehman et al. 2023). In the Black Hills, from 2016-2023, causes of mortality include hunting and trapping (≥44%), with the remainder of mortality comprised of poaching, predation, incidental trapping, vehicle collisions and unknown causes as smaller percentages (≤22%; Lehman and Nelson 2017, Lehman and Nelson 2018, Lehman et al. 2019, Lehman et al. 2020, Lehman et al. 2021, Lehman et al. 2022, Lehman et al. 2023). Hunting and trapping has been a primary mortality factor for adult bobcats in many bobcat populations (Anderson and Lovallo 2003). Males are typically harvested at a higher rate and have lower survival rates (McCord and Cardoza 1982, Quinn and Thompson 1987).

Higher rates of survival in unexploited populations suggests that harvest is additive (Knick 1990, Anderson and Lovallo 2003). Annual survival rates in healthy populations that are harvested ranged from 0.53–0.67, while adult survival rates in unexploited populations ranged from 0.78–0.97 (Rolley 1985, Knick 1990, Chamberlain et al. 1999, Anderson and Lovallo 2003). This is supported by data from Black Hills from 2016-2023. Annual survival when harvested cats are included varied from 0.49-0.84; however, when harvest is removed from the analysis survival varied from 0.76-0.94 (Lehman and Nelson 2017, Lehman and Nelson 2018, Lehman et al. 2019, Lehman et al. 2020, Lehman et al. 2021, Lehman et al. 2022, Lehman et al. 2023).

HABITAT SELECTION AND RANGE

Bobcats live in a variety of habitats including open grasslands, cropland field edges, woodland draws, and coniferous forests but they prefer more rugged terrain with rocky slopes and dense vegetation (Pollack 1950, Erickson 1955, Golden 1982, Mosby 2011). Essentially, optimal habitats are any which yield plentiful prey and provides ambush cover (Lovallo 1999). Bobcat resources that contain adequate amounts of habitat for their primary prey are considered most important and bobcat home range size and density are heavily dependent on prey resources (Lovallo 1999, Anderson and Lovallo 2003). The highest bobcat densities and smallest home ranges occur in areas with greater vegetation cover and prey abundance (Lembeck and Gould 1979, Miller and Speake 1979, Lovallo 1999), whereas the lowest densities of bobcats have much larger home ranges and lower productivity of prey (Bailey 1974, Fuller et al. 1985).

Other resource needs include secondary habitat such as protection from severe weather, loafing and denning habitat, and habitat which provides escape cover from human disturbance (Pollack 1950, Bailey 1974). Deep snow can influence bobcat resource selection and depths >13 cm show increased use of protected rock ledges, animal trails that were packed down, logs, and caves (McCord 1974, Hamilton 1982).

Denning sites have been located in rock shelters, caves, and dense piles of brush (Bailey 1974, Hamilton 1982). Den sites are moved several times while rearing kittens and females may move kittens from the natal sites to auxiliary sites up to 5 times (Bailey 1974). In South Dakota, bobcats selected resources which provided avoidance of detection by predators of dens at both area and den site scales; female bobcats selected for greater terrain ruggedness at a larger scale and also selected for greater horizontal cover at the immediate den site to provide security cover from predation (Morrison 2022). Loafing sites are often located on steep rocky slopes with dense vertical cover and sparse understory vegetation (Anderson 1990). Other loafing sites may include rock piles, blowdowns, and rocky cliffs (Rollings 1945).

Bobcats can inhabit areas adjacent to suburban and urban areas of human habitation. However, bobcats tend to select core areas within home ranges that avoid human activity (Neilsen and Woolf 2001). Roads and trails also influence bobcat movements and resource selection. Roads and trails can cause mortality through vehicle collisions, allow increased access for trapping and hunting, or provide increased access for use by competing predators, particularly during winter (Anderson and Lovallo 2003). Bobcat home range analysis found use areas had higher densities of trails and lower densities of secondary highways; bobcats crossed paved roads at a lower-than-expected rate (Lovallo and Anderson 1996).

Bobcats are almost exclusively carnivorous and diets throughout most of their range are mostly comprised of rabbits and hares, sometimes exceeding 90% (Bailey 1979, Parker and Smith 1983, Tycz 2016). Regional variation may occur where other species may dominate their diets such as white-tailed deer, cotton rats, or mountain beaver (Berg 1979, Beasom and Moore 1977, Knick et al. 1984). Deer can be an important food source, particularly in northern regions during winter. It appears there may be a seasonal shift to feeding on deer more in the winter months due to vulnerability in deeper snow (Matson 1948, Miller and Speake 1979, Dibello et al. 1990).

In western South Dakota, percent occurrence of prey items was evaluated and rabbits were most common in diets of bobcats at 51%; followed by mammals such as weasels (*Mustelidae*), squirrels (*Sciuridae*), porcupines (*Erethizontidae*) and other smaller mammals (25%), and then game birds such as wild turkey (*Meleagrididae*) and pheasant (*Phasianidae*) (17%; Tycz 2016). Ungulates, primarily deer, were rare in their diet at 7% (Tycz 2016).

POPULATION MODELING

The most comprehensive study on bobcat population dynamics occurred in Idaho from 1982 to 1985 (Knick 1990). Modeling revealed adult female survival had a larger effect on population growth than female reproduction. Modeling indicated this population in Idaho could not be sustained when female survival fell below 0.52. Reproduction was heavily tied to prey availability; pregnancy rates and kitten recruitment declined after lagomorph populations waned. This study recommended the harvest rate stay at 20% or less to maintain the bobcat population (Knick 1990).

A study was conducted in the Black Hills of South Dakota where adult and yearling bobcat survival was monitored from 2016 through 2022 and kitten (first 90 days) and juvenile (275 days) survival was monitored from 2019-2021. These vital rates were combined into a matrix projection model and the mean population growth rate was 0.85 (95% CI = 0.72, 1.02; Lehman et al. 2024). Elasticity and sensitivity analysis both indicate that population growth rate is most strongly influenced by adult females (Table 1). Both analyses also indicate the transition of kittens and juveniles to yearlings and adult reproductive contribution were the 2nd and 3rd most influential variable, though the rank of each matrix element is different between the two analyses. Both analyses agree that the remaining matrix elements have little influence on population growth rates (Lehman et al. 2024). Life stage simulations indicate that adult survival is important, but also illustrate how the lower-level juvenile portion of year 1 (91 days to 1 year) is more important than the kitten phase (first 90 days; Figure 5).

Modeling indicated that population growth will always be declining if either annual adult survival is less than ~0.85 or 275-day juvenile survival is less than ~0.35, regardless of other vital rates (Lehman et al. 2024). Conversely, modeling found that population growth will always be increasing if 275-day juvenile survival is greater ~0.65, regardless of other vital rates (barring extreme cases of complete reproductive failure; Figure 6). For annual adult survival probability >0.85 and 275-day juvenile survival probability between 0.35 and 0.65, populations can grow, remain stable, or decline, depending on values of all other vital rates. (Figure 6).

Table 1. Elasticity and sensitivity of components of a projection matrix for female bobcats in the Black Hills, South Dakota, USA, 2016–2022. Values in each column are the posterior mean, with limits of 95% credible intervals in parentheses.

Matrix Entry	Elasticity	Sensitivity
Adult survival	0.82 (0.62 – 0.95)	0.87 (0.73 – 0.97)
Kitten/juvenile survival	0.06 (0.02 – 0.13)	0.07 (0.02 – 0.16)
Adult reproductive contribution	0.06 (0.01 – 0.11)	0.81 (0.57 – 1.06)
Yearling survival	0.06 (0.01 – 0.11)	0.06 (0.02 – 0.0.13)
Yearling reproductive contribution	0.01 (0.00 – 0.02)	0.06 (0.01 – 0.12)
Juvenile reproductive contribution	0.00 (0.00 – 0.01)	0.06 (0.02 – 0.14)

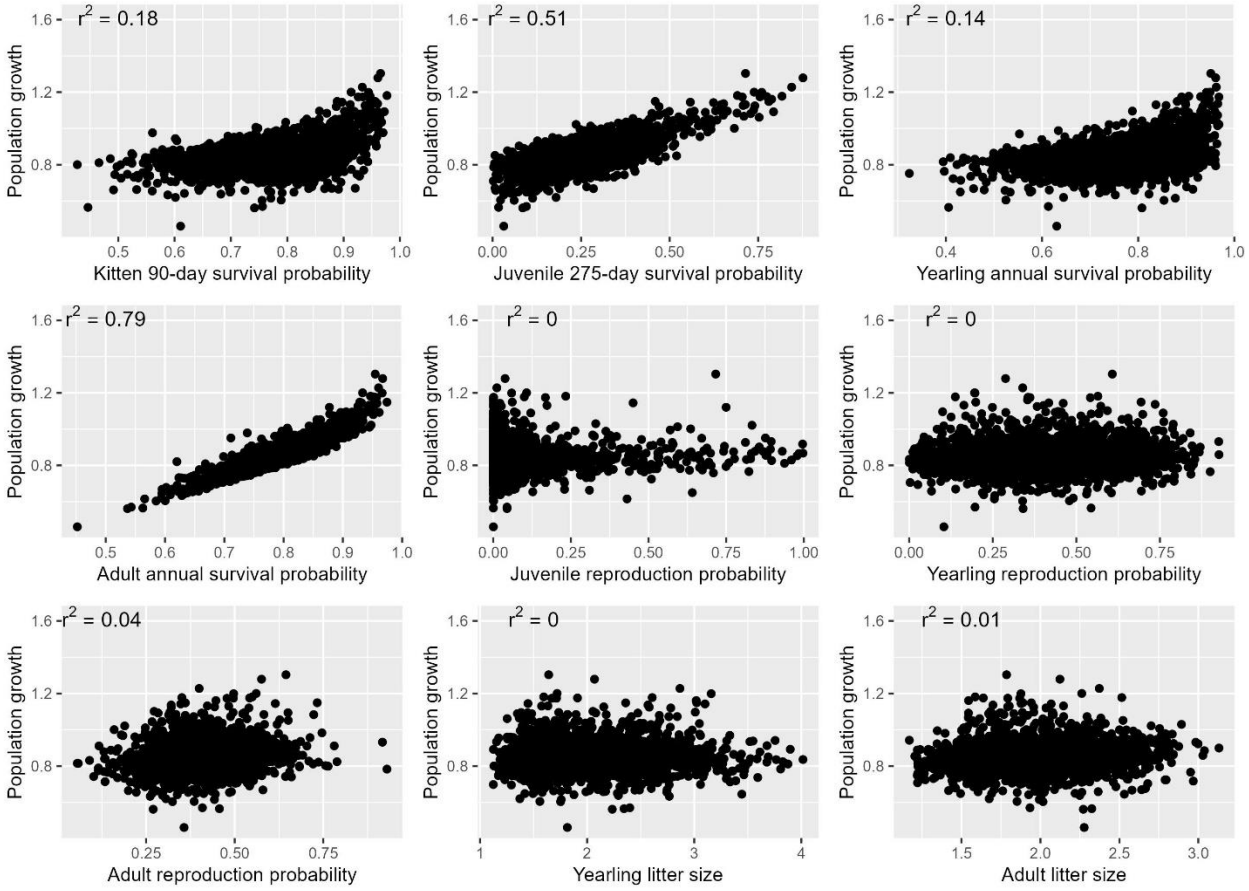

Figure 5. Life-stage simulation analysis results for female bobcats in the Black Hills, South Dakota, USA, 2016–2022. Each panel demonstrates how strongly population growth rate is correlated with variation in each lower-level vital rate. Coefficient of determination values (r^2) are obtained by assuming a liner relationship between population growth and lower-level vital rates.

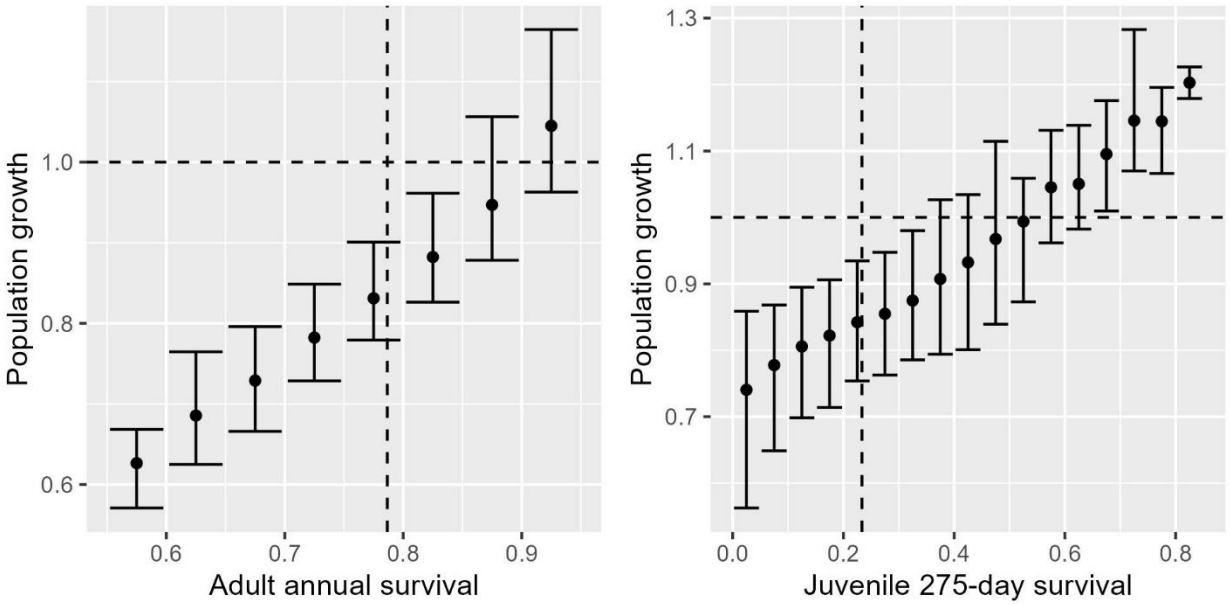

Figure 6. Population growth rates as a function of adult and juvenile female bobcat survival probability in the Black Hills, South Dakota, USA, 2016–2022. The *x*-axis is derived by binning survival probability into equal-length intervals of 0.05 units. The error bars are the limits of the 2.5 and 97.5 percentiles of corresponding population growth rate. The horizontal dashed line represents a stable population growth rate and the vertical dashed line represents the posterior mean adult and juvenile survival probabilities.

HARVEST MONITORING AND MANAGEMENT

Going back to 1973, the annual harvest of bobcats in South Dakota has varied greatly from a low of 62 to a high of 934 (Table 2). Season dates and length of time have also varied greatly over time. Since 2013, there has been a harvest unit west of the Missouri River and east of the Missouri River. There is currently a regulation where only one bobcat can be harvested per trapper or hunter during the season east of the Missouri River. Number of trappers and hunters, and age and gender ratios of harvested bobcats have varied greatly over time (Table 3). Average fur prices have varied from a low of $73 to a high of $465 (Table 3). Abundance estimates statewide have varied from roughly 1,300 to 2,700 bobcats with a percentage of harvest varying from 11 to 18% (Table 4).

Abundance of bobcats in the Black Hills has varied from roughly 130 to 360 and percentage of harvest has varied from 15% to 26% from 2017 to 2023 (Table 5). Harvest in the Black Hills from 2019-2020 (25% harvest rate; Lehman et al. 2020) and 2020-2021 (22% harvest rate; Lehman et al. 2021), during the time frame of intensive kitten and juvenile survival monitoring indicate overharvest as the population growth rate was $\lambda = 0.85$ (95% CI = 0.72, 1.02). This growth rate was confirmed when lambda from the geometric mean of each year using abundance from Table 5 was also calculated at 0.85. For the management of bobcats modeling has suggested bobcat populations would decline when adult female survival was <0.85 in the Black Hills, South Dakota (Lehman et al. 2024). Harvest of bobcats appears to be mostly

additive given that the highest survival rates come from naturally occurring populations where human harvest does not occur (Anderson and Lovallo 2003). Given how strongly population growth is influenced by survival, we evaluated how changing harvest rates would influence population growth rates. We made the following key assumptions when evaluating the effects of changing harvest rates on population growth: 1) Survival probability was estimated in the presence of harvest, which we call the 'baseline harvest rate'; 2) The effects of changes to harvest rate is related to this baseline rate; and 3) Harvest has a completely additive effect on survival probability. When assuming a baseline harvest rate of 23.5%, we found that reducing the harvest rate to 9% led to a positive mean growth rate (Figure 7) and a > 0.50 probability of a growing population (Figure 8; Lehman et al. 2024). When assuming a baseline harvest rate of 20%, we found that reducing the harvest rate to 7% led to a positive mean growth rate (Figure 7) and a > 0.50 probability of a growing population (Figure 8; Lehman et al. 2024). The simulation of a 23.5% harvest rate was the average harvest observed during the study of bobcats in the Black Hills from 2019-2021 (Morrison 2022, Lehman et al. 2024). We selected the simulation of a 20% harvest rate as this was the threshold considered important from modeling in Idaho (Knick 1990).

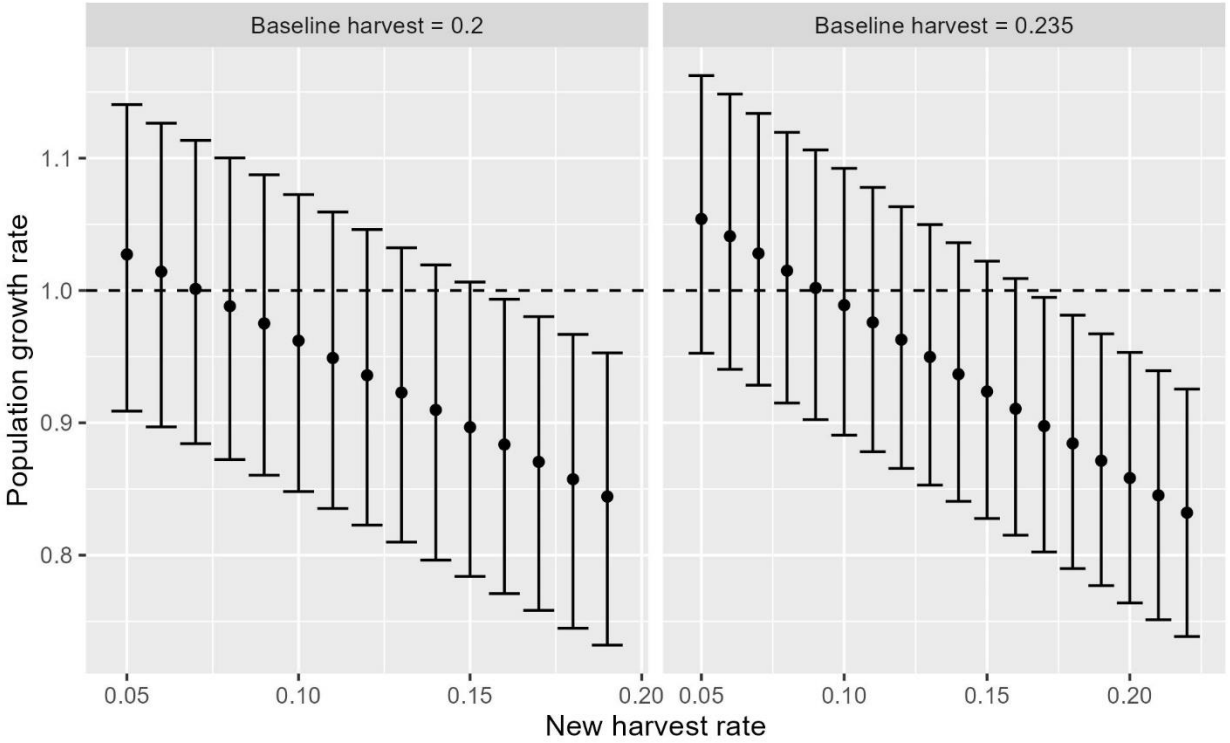

Figure 7. Population growth rates as a function of harvest rates of adult and juvenile female bobcats in the Black Hills, South Dakota, USA, 2016–2022. Each plot assumes survival was estimated in the presence of the harvest rate listed in the panel title (harvest rates of 0.20 and 0.235, respectively). The *x*-axis represents a new harvest rate relative to the baseline harvest rate listed in the panel title. Each point is the posterior mean population growth rate and the error bars are the limits of the 2.5 and 97.5 percentiles of the corresponding population growth rate. The horizontal line separates a growing population from a declining population.

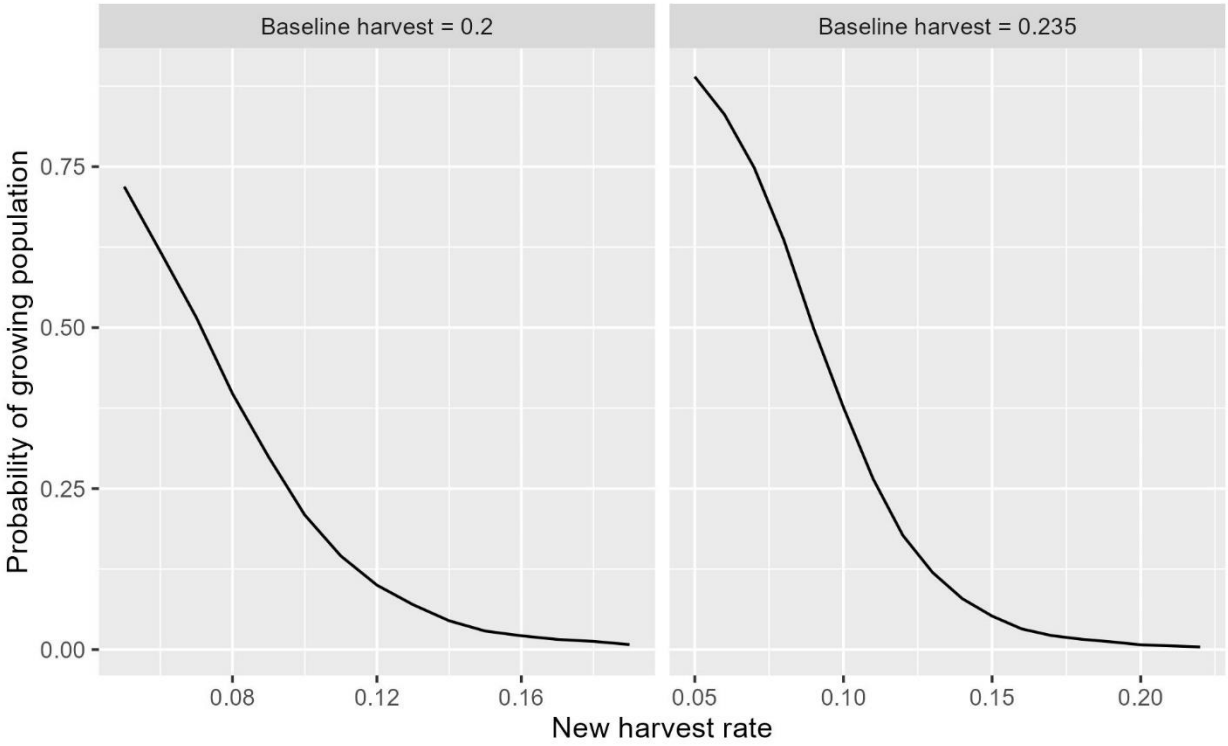

Figure 8. The posterior probability of a growing population (i.e., population growth rate > 1) as a function of harvest rates of adult and juvenile female bobcats in the Black Hills, South Dakota, USA, 2016–2022. Each plot assumes survival was estimated in the presence of the harvest rate listed in the panel title (harvest rates of 0.20 and 0.235, respectively). The *x*-axis represents a new harvest rate relative to the baseline harvest rate listed in the panel title.

Table 2. Bobcat season date, length, unit, and harvest data, 1973-2023, South Dakota.

Year	Season dates	Season length (days)	Unit	No. bobcats harvested
1973-74	Year long	365		
1974-75	Year Long	365		
1975-76	Nov. 08 - Feb. 29	114	Statewide	106
1976-77	Dec. 01 - Feb. 18	80	Statewide	85
1977-78	Dec. 15 - Jan. 15	32	West River	84
1978-79	Dec. 15 - Jan. 15	32	West River	167
1979-80	Dec. 15 - Jan. 15	32	West River	237
1980-81	Dec. 15 - Jan. 15	32	West River	132
1981-82	Closed			
1982-83	Dec. 01 - Dec. 31	31	West River	110
1983-84	Dec. 01 - Dec. 31	31	West River	81
1984-85	Closed			
1985-86	Closed			
1986-87	Dec. 13 - Jan. 11	30	West River	140
1987-88	Dec. 12 - J an.10	30	West River	225
1988-89	Dec. 10 - Jan. 8	30	West River	151
1989-90	Dec. 9 - Jan. 14	37	West River	81
1990-91	Dec. 8 - Jan. 13	37	West River	62
1991-92	Dec. 14 - Jan. 12	30	West River	134
1992-93	Dec. 12 - Jan. 10	30	West River	162
1993-94	Dec. 11 - Jan. 16	37	West River	99
2000-01	Dec. 9 - Feb. 15	69	West River	249
2001-02	Dec. 8 - Feb. 15	70	West River	374
2002-03	Dec. 14 - Feb. 15	63	West River	391
2003-04	Dec. 13 - Feb. 15	65	West River	621
2004-05	Dec. 11 - Feb. 15	67	West River	725
2005-06	Dec. 10 – Feb. 15	68	West River	721
2006-07	Dec. 9 - Feb. 15	69	West River	934
2007-08	Dec. 8 – Feb. 15	70	West River	792
2008-09	Dec. 13 - Feb. 15	65	West River	557
2009-10	Dec. 12 –Feb. 15	66	West River	364
2010-11	Dec. 11 – Feb. 15	67	West River	618
2011-12	Dec. 10 – Feb. 15	68	West River	784
2012-13	Dec. 08 - Feb. 15	70	West and East River	655
2013-14	Dec. 26 - Feb. 15	52	West and East River	347
2014-15	Dec. 26 - Feb. 15	52	West and East River	214
2015-16	Dec. 26 - Feb. 15	52	West and East River	252
2016-17	Dec. 26 - Feb. 15	52	West and East River	218
2017-18	Dec. 26 - Feb. 15	52	West and East River	462
2018-19	Dec. 26 - Feb. 15	52	West and East River	335
2019-20	Dec. 26 - Feb. 15	52	West and East River	267
2020-21	Dec. 26 - Feb. 15	52	West and East River	304
2021-22	Dec. 26 - Feb. 15	52	West and East River	261
2022-23	Dec. 26 - Feb. 15	52	West and East River	169

Table 3. Numbers of individuals harvesting bobcats, age and gender ratios of bobcat harvest, and bobcat fur prices, 1975-2023, South Dakota.

Year	No. individuals trapping/hunting	Percent juvenile	Percent males/ females	Fur price (average)[a]
1975-76				$137.90
1976-77				$163.88
1977-78				
1978-79		54.1	1.25	
1979-80		25.4	0.885	$181.30
1980-81	76	12.8	1.028	$189.48
1981-82	(closed)			
1982-83	76	26.4	1.381	$154.56
1983-84	53	21.9	2.529	$175.47
1984-85	(closed)			
1985-86	(closed)			
1986-87	87	1.4	1.283	$276.39
1987-88	123	34	1.5	$205.42
1988-89	86	22.1	1.345	$465.02
1989-90	45	15.6	2.484	$119.20
1990-91	29	19.6	1.8	$72.84
1991-92	57	26.8	1.646	$127.05
1992-93	77	27.3	1.527	$98.35
1993-94	59	10.1	1.967	$100.16
1994-95	88	18.2	1.567	$77.56
1995-96	63	10.3	1.868	$104.57
1996-97	49	18.4	1.486	$111.32
1997-98	85	28.4	1.258	$78.72
1998-99	71	18.7	1.735	$81.61
1999-00	77	22.3	1.212	$73.83
2000-01		25	1.439	$84.70
2001-02	115	11	1.309	$109.07
2002-03	104	16.1	1.148	$182.35
2003-04	177	22.5	1.155	$229.92
2004-05	178	29.5	1.183	$185.99
2005-06	162	28.3	0.98	$223.58
2006-07	235	24.6	1.184	$230.85
2007-08	197	23.8	1.013	$274.26
2008-09	188	22.8	1.048	$175.85
2009-10	148	14.7	1.034	$208.24
2010-11	192	16.4	0.81	$284.40
2011-12	252	16.1	0.866	$322.68
2012-13	281	18.9	0.909	$373.05
2013-14	139	16.6	1.582	$325.04
2014-15	88	22.7	1.07	$188.33
2015-16	123	26.6	1.38	$178.40
2016-17	103	24	1.2	$243.45
2017-18	215	11	1.2	$272.62
2018-19	164	7.5	1.25	$373.06
2019-20	133	15	1.4	$258.69
2020-21	184	18	1.46	$192.60
2021-22	151	5	1.54	$199.37
2022-23	100	20	1.27	$296.83

[a]Prices not adjusted for inflation.

Table 4. Abundance statewide generated through statistical population reconstruction, standard error of abundance estimate, number of bobcats harvested, and percentage of population harvested annually in South Dakota, 2013-2023.

Year	Statistical population reconstruction abundance	SE	Bobcats harvested	Percent of population harvested
2013-14	1968	274	347	17.63%
2014-15	1830	278	214	11.69%
2015-16	2195	321	254	11.57%
2016-17	2063	351	218	10.57%
2017-18	2708	370	462	17.06%
2018-19	2132	304	335	15.71%
2019-20	1910	279	267	13.98%
2020-21	1972	269	304	15.42%
2021-22	1568	230	261	16.65%
2022-23	1322	226	169	12.78%

Table 5. Abundance generated through Lincoln-Peterson estimator, standard error of abundance estimate, number of bobcats harvested, and percentage of population harvested annually in the Black Hills, South Dakota, 2017-2023. The geometric mean calculated from lambda of each year using abundance from Table 5 was $\lambda = 0.85$.

Year	Lincoln-Peterson abundance	SE	Bobcats harvested	Percent of population harvested
2017-18	359	161	53	14.76%
2018-19	290	103	44	15.17%
2019-20	159	39	39	24.53%
2020-21	129	25	29	22.48%
2021-22	132	22	30	22.73%
2022-23	161	39	42	26.09%

Harvest Strategies

The use of genetic structure from harvested bobcats in South Dakota identified distinct eastern and western populations based on 2 genetic clusters being most supported statistically (Figure 9; Fetherston 2021). However, management should also take into consideration easily definable geographic areas and bobcat demographics to potentially provide for management at finer levels of structure. Research has also identified unique demographic characteristics for bobcat populations from the Black Hills and West River areas (Tycz 2016, Morrison 2022, Lehman et al. 2024). Using a combination of genetic structure, geographic area, and demographic characteristics harvest management could be strategically implemented in 3 management zones (Figure 10). The Black Hills area is unique in that the forested system differs from the open habitats further east. The West River area is unique in that the open rugged terrain has much less agriculture when compared to the East River system (Figure 10). Each management zone has two harvest strategies that can be implemented: 1) Moderate Harvest- a 52-day season that allows for unlimited bobcat harvest per trapper or hunter in that zone; and 2) Low Harvest- a 52-day season that allows for the harvest of only one bobcat per trapper or hunter in that zone.

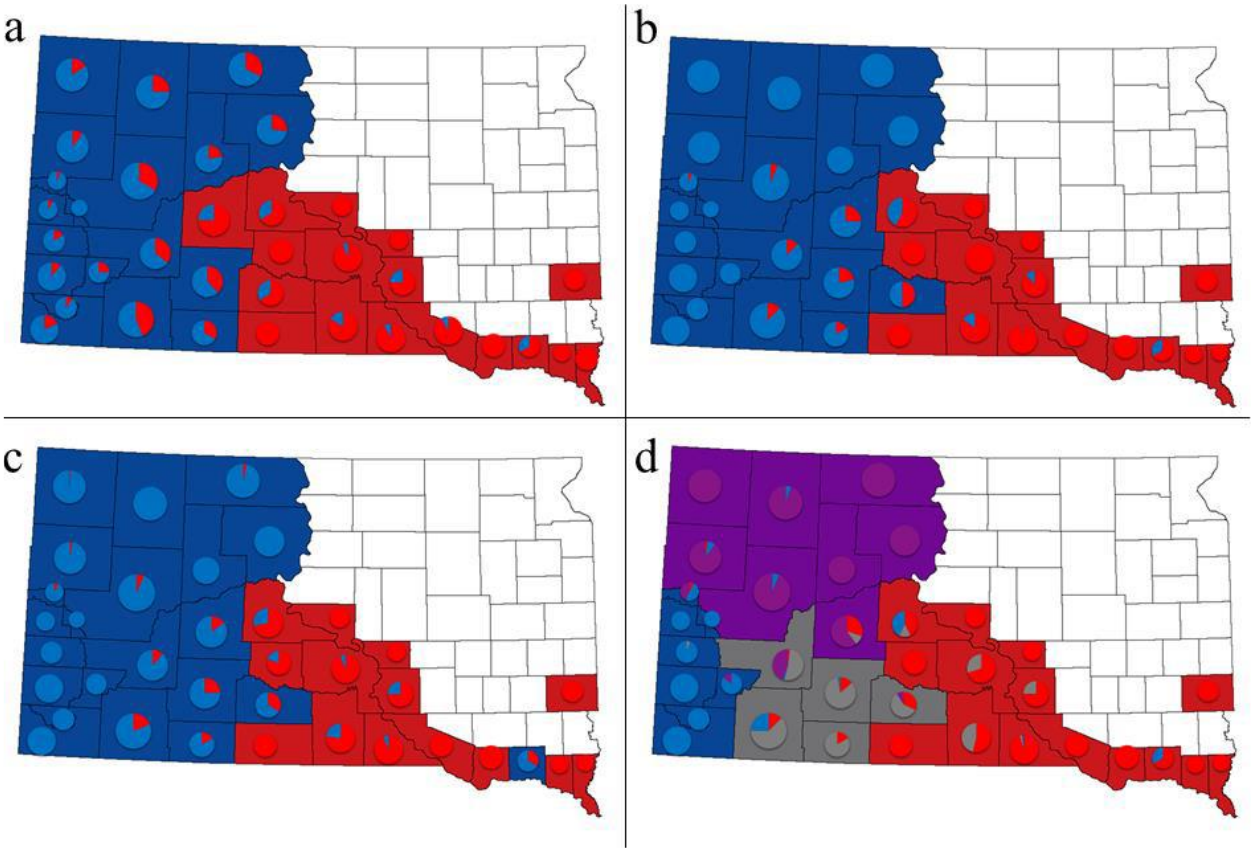

Figure 9. County-level visualizations of the Bayesian clustering algorithm results for harvested bobcats sampled in South Dakota from December 2014–February 2019 (Fetherston 2021). Figures **a**-**c** looked at various structural analysis methods supporting two genetic populations and **d** shows a population structural analysis considering four populations (Fetherston 2021).

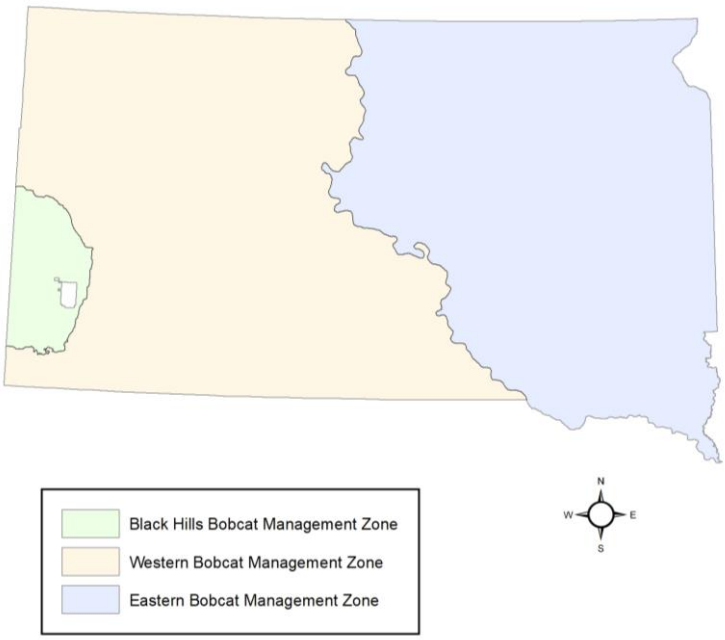

Figure 10. Bobcat management zones based on geographic features, bobcat demographics, and genetic structure. Management zones also differ in vegetation and topography for bobcats in South Dakota.

Black Hills Management Zone

In the Black Hills of South Dakota research demonstrates that juvenile survival (91 days to 1 year) is important in bobcat population growth and highly correlated with low juvenile-to-adult harvest ratios (Lehman et al. 2024). Life-stage simulation analysis also demonstrated that the ratio of juveniles and yearlings to adults is highly correlated with population growth rate (Figure 11). Harvest of juveniles in the Black Hills population was 4% in 2020 and 0% in 2021 (Lehman et al. 2020, Lehman et al. 2021), while the probability a juvenile survives its first year was 18% during those 2 years (Lehman et al. 2024). A portion of South Dakota trapping and hunting methods such as snaring and shooting are a random method of take (35-37% of harvest; Lehman et al. 2020, Lehman et al. 2021) and juvenile-to-adult harvest ratios should provide an indicator of age structure in the population. In Montana, the best predictor of population growth was the ratio of number of juveniles per adults harvested with higher ratios indicating positive growth rates (Newell and Podruzny 2018).

For the Black Hills Management Zone, if the juvenile-to-adult harvest ratio falls below 10% for two or more consecutive years the Black Hills zone will enter into a “Low Harvest” strategy (Table 6; Figure 11). Managers have the flexibility to use a more conservative strategy (i.e., Low Harvest) even if the zone has data to support a “Moderate Harvest” strategy such as ≥10% juvenile-to-adult harvest ratio and lambda ≥1.0. It could be possible to have ≥10% juvenile-to-adult harvest ratio and lambda <1.0 based on research. If that occurs the strategy should

default to the “Low Harvest” strategy. If the Black Hills Zone stays below 10% for 4+ years, it should be a candidate for additional research and survey monitoring. For instance, in the Black Hills, infrared cameras could provide supplemental survey information which would inform abundance, or research information could provide growth rate information. If the additional research or survey information confirms a negative growth rate for 4+ years, harvest closure would be considered. It could potentially be reopened 2 years after the closure to collect juvenile-to-adult harvest ratios and additional research information could be collected which would inform future management direction.

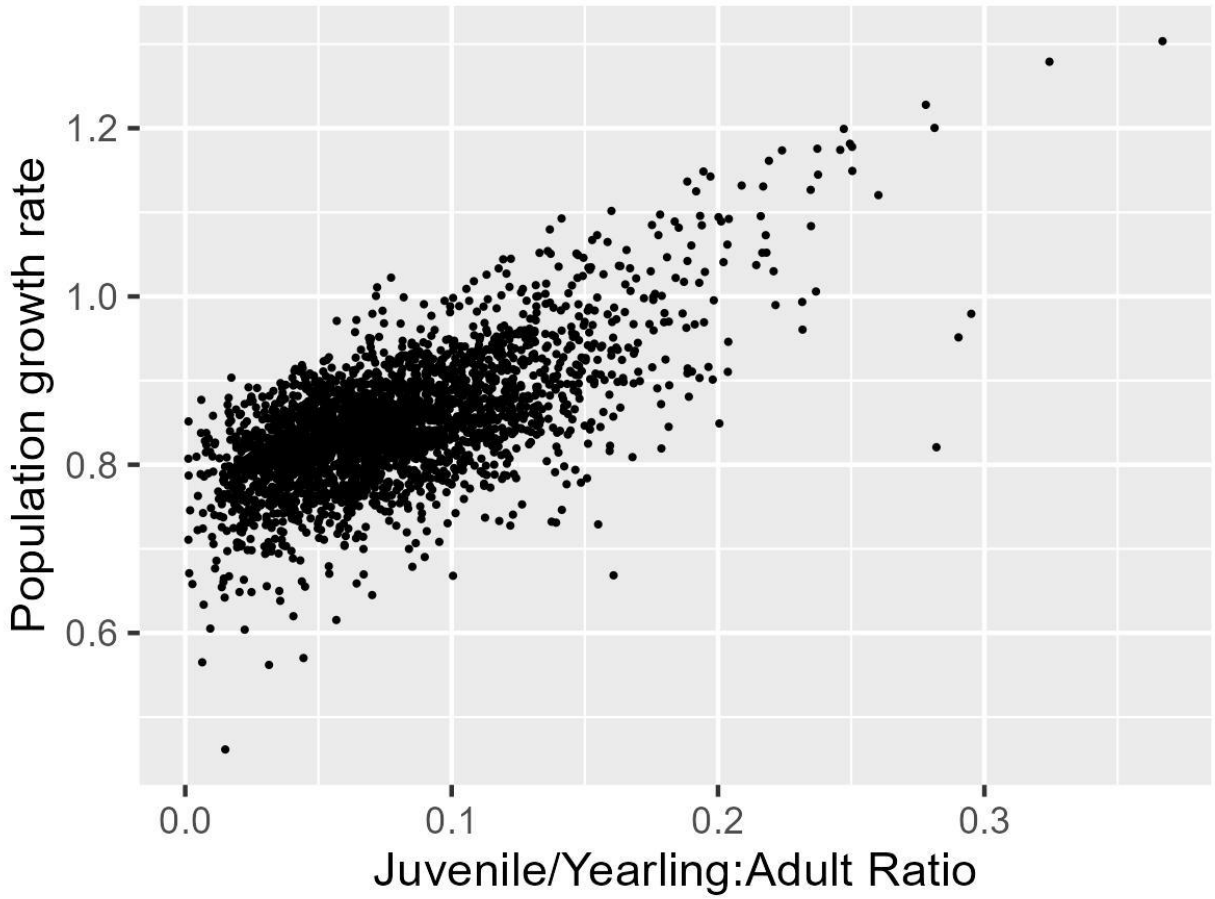

Figure 11. Correlation between population growth rate and the ratio of juveniles and yearlings to adults for bobcats in the Black Hills, South Dakota, USA, 2016–2022.

Table 6. Decision support table to guide harvest strategy of bobcats in the Black Hills, South Dakota.

Guiding Factors	Low Harvest[a]	Moderate Harvest[b]
Juvenile-to-Adult harvest ratio (two-year trend)	<10%	≥10%
Demographic data available	Lambda <1.0	Lambda ≥1.0

[a]A 52-day season that allows for the harvest of only one bobcat per trapper or hunter.
[b]A 52-day season that allows for the harvest of an unlimited number of bobcats per trapper or hunter.

West River Management Zone

Research from within the West River Zone has provided vital rate information for use in a Leslie matrix population growth model (Tycz 2016). Adult female survival with harvest mortality removed in combination with juvenile-to-adult ratios, and harvest percentages provide estimates of lambda values, or growth rates. Growth rates are displayed as they relate to low (0.79), moderate (0.84), and high (0.89) survival rates. Also, as it relates to poor (0.05), low (0.10), moderate (0.20), and high (0.30) recruitment rates (i.e., juvenile-to-adult ratios), and as it relates to 0%, 5%, and 10% harvest rates (Table 7). It should be noted Table 7 should be used as a general guide as adult survival is not up to date and the percentage of harvest was reported at 8% from collared bobcats when sample sizes were highest the final year of the study (Tycz 2016). Our modeling allowed for flexibility in juvenile-to-adult ratios, annual female survival, and harvest rates so managers could examine potential population growth rates at varying levels (Table 7).

Using the growth rate table (Table 7) managers can utilize the juvenile-to-adult harvest ratio collected from harvested bobcats from the West River Zone. Managers would apply the collected juvenile-to-adult harvest ratio, as well as a 5% harvest rate, and a moderate adult survival rate. If the juvenile-to-adult harvest ratio falls below 10% (or below the low recruitment category) for two or more consecutive years, the West River Zone could enter into a “Low Harvest” strategy. If the juvenile-to-adult harvest ratio falls below 10% it would equate to lambda <0.98 when at a 5% harvest rate and at a moderate adult survival rate (Table 7).

Table 7. Leslie matrix growth rate estimates based on adult female survival, recruitment, and percentage of harvest for the management of bobcats in the West River Zone of South Dakota.

		Poor Recruitment (**5 juv**:100 adults)[a]			Low Recruitment (**10 juv**:100 adults)[a]			Mod. Recruitment (**20 juv**:100 adults)[a]			High Recruitment (**30 juv**:100 adults)[a]		
Annual Female Survival[b]		Low	Mod	High	Low	Mod	High	Low	Mod	High	Low	Mod	High
Population Growth Rate Based on Female Harvest Rate[c]	10%	0.83	0.88	0.93	0.88	0.93	0.99	0.94	0.99	1.05	1	1.06	1.12
	5%	0.87	0.93	0.99	0.92	0.98	1.04	0.99	1.05	1.11	1.05	1.12	1.18
	0%	0.92	0.98	1.04	0.97	1.03	1.1	1.04	1.11	1.17	1.11	1.18	1.25

[a]Poor recruitment at 5% or at 5 juv:100 adults would be adjusted to 33 juv:100 adults. Pregnancy rate 35% at 2.7 kittens/adult with a simulation of 30 females would add 28 kittens to our ratio and would now be 33 juv:100 adults.
Low recruitment at 10% or at 10 juv:100 adults would be adjusted to 46 juv:100 adults. Pregnancy rate 44% at 2.7 kittens/adult with a simulation of 30 females would add 36 kittens to our ratio and would now be 46 juv:100 adults.
Moderate recruitment at 20% or at 20 juv:100 adults would be adjusted to 63 juv:100 adults. Pregnancy rate 53% at 2.7 kittens/adult with a simulation of 30 females would add 43 kittens to our ratio and would now be 63 juv:100 adults.
High recruitment at 30% or at 30 juv:100 adults would be adjusted to 80 juv:100 adults. Pregnancy rate 62% at 2.7 kittens/adult with a simulation of 30 females would add 50 kittens to our ratio and would now be 80 juv:100 adults.
[b]Annual female survival rates in the absence of harvest are categorized as follows:

1) Low=0.79.
2) Moderate=0.84.
3) High=0.89

[c]Percent of female pre-hunt population that is harvested.

East River Management Zone

Research from within the East River Zone has been limited. However, a survey studying the spatial patterns of bobcats in Charles Mix and Brule counties indicated bobcats were most likely to use woodland and shrubland patches (Dart 2021). This type of habitat is very limited in eastern South Dakota and a Low Harvest Strategy should be implemented unless demographic information is collected that suggests a growing population that can support a more liberal harvest strategy.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

There are several research information gaps regarding bobcat populations across the state which include: 1) Reliable survey methods; 2) Demographics (e.g., collection of vital rates such as adult, yearling, juvenile, and kitten survival, as well as pregnancy rates and litter sizes of both adult and yearling female bobcats); 3) Distribution and abundance; 4) Resource selection and availability; 5) Prey availability; 6) Disease impacts; and 6) Interactions with competing carnivores. Corresponding management needs include: 1) Implement harvest strategies that match geographic abundance; 2) Monitor abundance of both bobcats and prey availability; 3) Protect and improve habitat; 4) Improve public knowledge of management techniques; and 5) Evaluate effectiveness of and need for federal oversight (Bluett et al. 2001).

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following statements have guided the development of bobcat management goals and objectives (Table 5) and reflect the collective values of the SDGFP in relation to management of bobcats in South Dakota:

- Wildlife, including bobcats, contributes significantly to the quality of life in South Dakota and therefore must be sustained for future generations.
- Recreational hunting and trapping are legitimate uses of bobcats and must be encouraged and preserved.
- Collaboration among various agencies, including NPS, USFS, BLM, Tribes, and the State, is critical for the future of bobcats and their habitats in South Dakota, and is deserving of recognition and respect.
- Reasonable regulations are necessary for equitable distribution of the benefits of wildlife, including bobcats, and to promote ethical and safe behavior.
- Future of wildlife, including bobcats, depends on a public that appreciates, understands, and supports wildlife and wildlife conservation and in the public's right to participate in decisions related to wildlife issues.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

The goal for bobcat management in South Dakota is to maximize user opportunity while maintaining populations consistent with ecological, social, aesthetic, and economic values of the people of South Dakota and our visitors.

Objectives and Strategies

Objective 1. Annually determine status of bobcat populations.

Strategy A. Where adequate data exist, use statistical population reconstruction and matrix projection models to predict abundance and population growth.

Strategy B. Where feasible, utilize surveys including mark-recapture, hunter harvest, and harvest composition.

Strategy C. Supplement survey data with research findings when available.

Objective 2. Bi-annually review and set bobcat management objectives; use harvest strategies to maximize sustainable recreational opportunity.

Strategy A. Bi-annually review bobcat harvest strategies, which will be used to develop 2-year recommendations based on available biological data, public input, and staff recommendations.

Strategy B. Generally, bobcat harvest will be monitored relative to population estimates, vital rates (when collected), and juvenile-to-adult ratios. We will take into account the following criteria: 1) Statewide population size based upon statistical population reconstruction or other estimates; 2) Vital rates such as adult and kitten survival from research conducted in areas across the state to estimate population growth rates (when collected); and 3) Juvenile-to-adult harvest ratios.

Strategy C. Each bobcat management zone will implement a harvest strategy based on criteria if data are available. Two harvest strategies that can be implemented include: 1) Moderate Harvest- a 52-day season that allows for unlimited bobcat harvest per trapper or hunter; and 2) Low Harvest- a 52-day season that allows for harvesting only one bobcat per trapper or hunter. Strategies will be guided by juvenile-to-adult harvest ratios and demographic data if available.

Objective 3. Maintain, manage, and protect existing bobcat habitat and prey base in South Dakota. Bobcats occur across a wide range of habitat types and makes it difficult to manage for any specific habitats. Therefore, it would be more appropriate to manage for wild turkey and lagomorph (i.e., rabbit) habitat needs as a primary prey base.

Strategy A. Maintain existing partnerships with the USFS, BLM, NPS, private landowners, and other state, local, and private conservation partners to support programs and practices encouraging proper bobcat habitat management on public and private lands.

Strategy B. Manage for wild turkey (*Meleagrididae*) and lagomorph (e.g., eastern cottontail rabbit [*Sylvilagus floridanus*]) habitat needs as a primary prey base.

Objective 4. Continue to use science-based research and surveys to answer questions related to public attitudes towards bobcat management.

Strategy A. Annually evaluate and prioritize research and survey needs for bobcats. Develop research and survey proposals and seek funding opportunities.

Strategy B. Use research and survey findings to guide bobcat management where available and feasible.

Objective 5. The GFP will inform and educate the public on bobcat ecology, management, and research.

Strategy A. By March 2024, provide an electronic copy of the "South Dakota Bobcat Management Plan 2024–2028" on the GFP's website. Printed copies will be available upon request.

Strategy B. Use all available media to educate and inform the public regarding bobcat status, ecology, and harvest.

Table 8. Implementation schedule and primary responsibility, 2024-2028.

Goals, Objectives & Strategies	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Primary Responsibility
GOAL: The goal for bobcat management in South Dakota is to maximize user opportunity while maintaining populations consistent with ecological, social, aesthetic, and economic values of the people of South Dakota and our visitors.						
OBJECTIVE 1: Annually determine status of bobcat populations.						
Strategies						
Strategy A: Where adequate data exist, use statistical population reconstruction and matrix projection models to predict abundance and population growth.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Regional Staff Senior Biologists Game Survey Coordinator
Strategy B: Where feasible, utilize surveys including mark-recapture, hunter harvest, and harvest composition.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Senior Biologists Regional Terrestrial Resource Supervisors
Strategy C: Supplement survey data with research findings when available.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Senior Biologists
OBJECTIVE 2: Bi-annually review and set bobcat management objectives; use harvest strategies to maximize sustainable recreational opportunity.						
Strategies						
Strategy A: Bi-annually review bobcat harvest strategies, which will be used to develop 2-year recommendations based on available biological data, public input, and staff recommendations.	✓		✓		✓	Senior Biologists Regional Terrestrial Resource Supervisors Administration
Strategy B: Generally, bobcat harvest will be monitored relative to population estimates, vital rates (when collected), and juvenile-to-adult ratios. We will take into account the following criteria: 1) Statewide population size based upon statistical population reconstruction or other estimates; 2) Vital rates such as adult and kitten survival from research conducted in areas across the state to estimate population growth rates (when collected); and 3) Juvenile-to-adult harvest ratios.	✓		✓		✓	Senior Biologists Regional Terrestrial Resource Supervisors Administration
Strategy C: Each bobcat management zone will implement a harvest strategy based	✓		✓		✓	Senior Biologists

on criteria if data are available. Two harvest strategies that can be implemented include: 1) Moderate Harvest- a 52-day season that allows for unlimited bobcat harvest per trapper or hunter; and 2) Low Harvest- a 52-day season that allows for harvesting only one bobcat per trapper or hunter. Strategies will be guided by juvenile-to-adult harvest ratios and demographic data if available.						Regional Terrestrial Resource Supervisors Administration
OBJECTIVE 3: Maintain, manage, and protect existing bobcat habitat and prey base in South Dakota. Bobcats occur across a wide range of habitat types and makes it difficult to manage for any specific habitats. Therefore, it would be more appropriate to manage for wild turkey and lagomorph (i.e., rabbit) habitat needs as a primary prey base.						
Strategies						
Strategy A: Maintain existing partnerships with the USFS, BLM, NPS, private landowners, and other state, local, and private conservation partners to support programs and practices encouraging proper bobcat habitat management on public and private lands.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Regional Staff Regional Terrestrial Resource Supervisors Administration
Strategy B: Manage for wild turkey (*Meleagrididae*) and lagomorph (e.g., eastern cottontail rabbit [*Sylvilagus floridanus*]) habitat needs as a primary prey base.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Regional Staff Regional Terrestrial Resource Supervisors Administration
OBJECTIVE 4: Continue to use science-based research and surveys to answer questions related to public attitudes towards bobcat management.						
Strategies						
Strategy A: Annually evaluate and prioritize research and survey needs for bobcats. Develop research and survey proposals and seek funding opportunities.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Senior Biologists Regional Terrestrial Resource Supervisors Administration
Strategy B: Use research and survey findings to guide bobcat management where	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Senior Biologists

available and feasible.						Regional Terrestrial Resource Supervisors Administration
OBJECTIVE 5: The GFP will inform and educate the public on bobcat ecology, management, and research.						
Strategies						
Strategy A: By March 2024, provide an electronic copy of the "South Dakota Bobcat Management Plan 2024–2028" on the GFP's website. Printed copies will be available upon request.		✓	✓	✓	✓	Communications Administration
Strategy B: Use all available media to educate and inform the public regarding bobcat status, ecology, and harvest.		✓	✓	✓	✓	Communications Administration

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SOUTH DAKOTA BOBCAT ACTION PLAN 2024–2028

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF GAME, FISH AND PARKS
PIERRE, SOUTH DAKOTA

WILDLIFE DIVISION REPORT 2024–01AP

FEBRUARY 2024

This document is for general, strategic guidance for the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks (SDGFP) and serves to identify what we strive to accomplish related to bobcat management. By itself this document is of little value; the value is in its implementation. This process will emphasize working cooperatively with interested publics in both the planning process and the regular program activities related to bobcat management. This plan will be used by Department staff and Commission on an annual basis and will be formally evaluated every four years. Plan updates and changes, however, may occur more frequently as needed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This plan is a product of substantial discussion and input from many wildlife professionals and the South Dakota public sector. In addition, those comments and suggestions received from private landowners, trappers, hunters, and those who recognize the value of bobcats and their associated habitats were also considered.

Management Plan Coordinator – Chad Lehman, South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks (SDGFP).

SDGFP Bobcat Management Plan Team that assisted with plan writing, data review and analyses, critical reviews and/or edits to the South Dakota Bobcat Management Plan – Nathan Baker, Keith Fisk, Trenton Haffley, Julie Lindstrom, Brady Neiles, Andrew Norton, Kylie Sinclair, and Dan Sternhagen.

All text and data contained within this document are subject to revision for corrections, updates, and data analyses.

Cover photo courtesy of Brady Neiles.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) is an impressive predator that can hunt by stalking or ambush and can survive in a wide variety of different terrain and habitat. Their uncanny ability to get close to prey is remarkable and such behavior has been described in detail as a "hunting bed" or a lookout where they lay and wait for prey to walk by. This species is a member of the mesocarnivore guild in North America and plays a vital role in ecological communities through trophic cascades as well as nutrient and energy cycling within food webs. Trophic cascades can occur through population-level effects where predators prey on herbivores and consequently decrease the abundance of herbivores that may negatively impact certain plant communities. Bobcat population abundance and growth rates may be tied closely with prey availability and predator prey relationships.

This management plan provides important historical background and relevant biological information for the sustainable management of bobcats in South Dakota. Current bobcat research information, survey information, and relevant biological literature are presented, along with a thorough discussion of objectives and strategies to guide management of this important resource into the future. This plan is intended to guide managers and biologists over the next five years but should be considered a working document that will be amended as new biological and social data provide opportunities to improve management of the bobcat resource in South Dakota.

The following objectives have been identified for the successful management of bobcats: 1) Annually determine status of bobcat populations; 2) Bi-annually review and set bobcat management objectives and use harvest strategies to maximize sustainable recreational opportunity; 3) Maintain, manage, and protect existing bobcat habitat and prey base in South Dakota. Bobcats occur across a wide range of habitat types which makes it difficult to manage for specific habitats. Therefore, it would be more appropriate to manage for wild turkey and lagomorph (e.g., eastern cottontail rabbit [*Sylvilagus floridanus*]) habitat needs as a primary prey base; 4) Continue to use science-based research and surveys to answer questions related to public attitudes towards bobcat management; and 5) Inform and educate the public on bobcat ecology, management, and research.

The "*South Dakota Bobcat Management Plan, 2024-2028*" will serve as the guiding document for decision making and implementation of actions to ensure bobcat populations and their habitats are managed appropriately. South Dakota Department of Game, Fish, and Parks (SDGFP) will work closely with United States Forest Service (USFS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), National Park Service (NPS), private landowners, and sportsmen and women to overcome challenges and take advantage of opportunities regarding the management of bobcats in South Dakota.

Introduction

The bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) is an impressive predator that can hunt by stalking or ambush. Their uncanny ability to get close to prey is remarkable and such behavior has been described in detail as a "hunting bed" or a lookout where they lay and wait for prey to walk by (Rollings 1945, Marshall and Jenkins 1966, McCord 1974). This amazing behavior was observed by researchers in the Black Hills where a radiomarked bobcat was waiting for a prairie dog to emerge for over 45 minutes before successfully capturing its prey (personal observation, SDGFP). This species is a member of the mesocarnivore guild in North America and plays a vital role in ecological communities through trophic cascades as well as nutrient and energy cycling within food webs (Lesmeister et al. 2015). Trophic cascades can occur through population-level effects where predators prey on herbivores and consequently decrease the abundance of herbivores that may negatively impact certain plant communities (Schmitz et al. 1997). Bobcat population abundance and growth rates may be tied closely with prey availability and predator prey relationships; undoubtably lagomorph (i.e., rabbits [*Sylvilagus* spp. and *Lepus* spp.]) abundance plays an important role in bobcat survival and reproduction (Anderson and Lovallo 2003).

Population Modeling

A study was conducted in the Black Hills of South Dakota where adult and yearling bobcat survival was monitored from 2016 through 2023 and kitten (first 90 days) and juvenile (275 days) survival were monitored from 2019-21. These vital rates were combined into a matrix projection model and the mean population growth rate was 0.85 (95% CI = 0.72, 1.02; Lehman et al. 2024). Elasticity and sensitivity analysis both indicate that population growth rate is most strongly influenced by female adults. Both analyses also indicate the transition of kittens and juveniles to yearlings and adult reproductive contribution were the 2nd and 3rd most influential variable, though the rank of each matrix element is different between the two analyses. Both analyses agree that the remaining matrix elements have little influence on population growth rates (Lehman et al. 2024). Life stage simulations indicate that adult survival is important, but also illustrate how the lower-level juvenile portion of year 1 (91 days to 1 year) is more important than the kitten phase (first 90 days).

Harvest Strategy

The use of genetic structure from harvested bobcats in South Dakota identified distinct eastern and western populations based on 2 genetic clusters being most supported statistically (Fetherston 2021). However, management should also take into consideration easily definable geographic areas and bobcat demographics to potentially provide for management at finer levels of structure. Research has also identified unique demographic characteristics for bobcat populations from the Black Hills and West River areas (Tycz 2016, Morrison 2022, Lehman et al. 2024). Using a combination of genetic structure, geographic area, and demographic characteristics harvest management could be strategically implemented in 3 management zones (Figure 1). The Black Hills area is unique in that the forested system differs from the open habitats further east. The West River area is unique in that the open rugged terrain has much

less agriculture when compared to the East River system (Figure 1). Each management zone has two harvest strategies that can be implemented: 1) Moderate Harvest- a 52-day season that allows for unlimited bobcat harvest per trapper or hunter in that zone; and 2) Low Harvest- a 52-day season that allows for the harvest of only one bobcat per trapper or hunter in that zone.

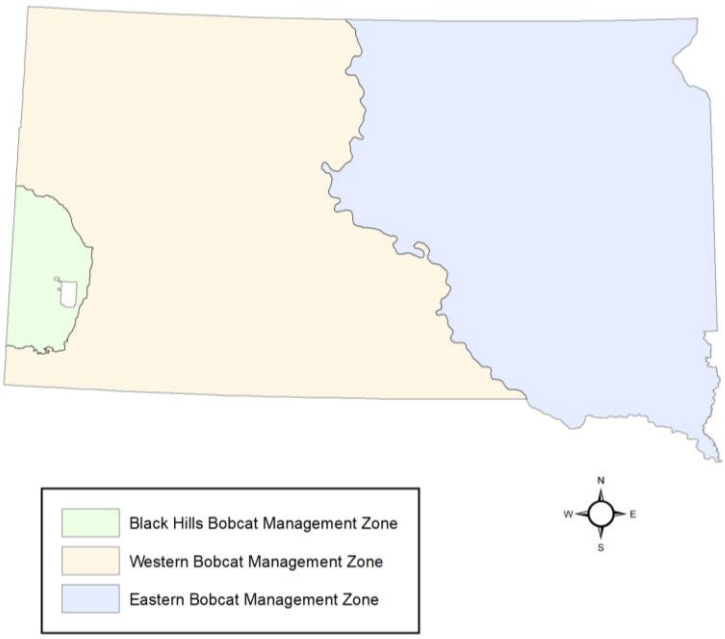


Figure 1. Bobcat management zones based on geographic features, bobcat demographics, and genetic structure. Management zones also differ in vegetation and topography for bobcats in South Dakota.

Black Hills Management Zone

In the Black Hills of South Dakota research demonstrates that juvenile survival (91 days to 1 year) is important in bobcat population growth and highly correlated with low juvenile-to-adult harvest ratios (Lehman et al. 2024). Life-stage simulation analysis also demonstrated that the ratio of juveniles and yearlings to adults is highly correlated with population growth rate. Harvest of juveniles in the Black Hills population was 4% in 2020 and 0% in 2021 (Lehman et al. 2020, Lehman et al. 2021), while the probability a juvenile survives its first year was 18% during those 2 years (Lehman et al. 2024). A portion of South Dakota trapping and hunting methods such as snaring and shooting are a random method of take (35-37% of harvest; Lehman et al. 2020, Lehman et al. 2021) and juvenile-to-adult harvest ratios should provide an indicator of age structure in the population. In Montana, the best predictor of population growth was the ratio of number of juveniles per adults harvested with higher ratios indicating positive growth rates (Newell and Podruzny 2018).

For the Black Hills Management Zone, if the juvenile-to-adult harvest ratio falls below 10% for two or more consecutive years the Black Hills zone will enter into a "Low Harvest" strategy (Table 1). Managers have the flexibility to use a more conservative strategy (i.e., Low Harvest) even if the zone has data to support a "Moderate Harvest" strategy such as ≥10% juvenile-to-adult harvest ratio and lambda ≥1.0. It could be possible to have ≥10% juvenile-to-adult harvest ratio and lambda <1.0 based on research. If that occurs the strategy should default to the "Low Harvest" strategy. If the Black Hills Zone stays below 10% for 4+ years, it should be a candidate for additional research and survey monitoring. For instance, in the Black Hills, infrared cameras could provide supplemental survey information which would inform abundance, or research information could provide growth rate information. If the additional research or survey information confirms a negative growth rate for 4+ years, harvest closure would be considered. It could potentially be reopened 2 years after the closure to collect juvenile-to-adult harvest ratios and additional research information could be collected which would inform future management direction.

Table 1. Decision support table to guide harvest strategy of bobcats in the Black Hills, South Dakota.

Guiding Factors	Low Harvest[a]	Moderate Harvest[b]
Juvenile-to-Adult harvest ratio (two-year trend)	<10%	≥10%
Demographic data available	Lambda <1.0	Lambda ≥1.0

[a]A 52-day season that allows for the harvest of only one bobcat per trapper or hunter.
[b]A 52-day season that allows for the harvest of an unlimited number of bobcats per trapper or hunter.

West River Management Zone

Research from within the West River Zone has provided vital rate information for use in a Leslie matrix population growth model (Tycz 2016). Adult female survival with harvest mortality removed in combination with juvenile-to-adult ratios, and harvest percentages provide estimates of lambda values, or growth rates. Growth rates are displayed as they relate to low (0.79), moderate (0.84), and high (0.89) survival rates. Also, as it relates to poor (0.05), low (0.10), moderate (0.20), and high (0.30) recruitment rates (i.e., juvenile-to-adult ratios), and as it relates to 0%, 5%, and 10% harvest rates (Table 2). It should be noted Table 2 should be used as a general guide as adult survival is not up to date and the percentage of harvest was reported at 8% from collared bobcats when sample sizes were highest the final year of the study (Tycz 2016). Our modeling allowed for flexibility in juvenile-to-adult ratios, annual female survival, and harvest rates so managers could examine potential population growth rates at varying levels (Table 2).

Using the growth rate table (Table 2) managers can utilize the juvenile-to-adult harvest ratio collected from harvested bobcats from the West River Zone. Managers would apply the collected juvenile-to-adult harvest ratio, as well as a 5% harvest rate, and a moderate adult survival rate. If the juvenile-to-adult harvest ratio falls below 10% (or below the low

recruitment category) for two or more consecutive years, the West River Zone could enter into a "Low Harvest" strategy. If the juvenile-to-adult harvest ratio falls below 10% it would equate to lambda <0.98 when at a 5% harvest rate and at a moderate adult survival rate (Table 2).

Table 2. Leslie matrix growth rate estimates based on adult female survival, recruitment, and percentage of harvest for the management of bobcats in the West River Zone of South Dakota.

		Poor Recruitment (**5 juv**:100 adults)[a]			Low Recruitment (**10 juv**:100 adults)[a]			Mod. Recruitment (**20 juv**:100 adults)[a]			High Recruitment (**30 juv**:100 adults)[a]		
Annual Female Survival[b]		Low	Mod	High	Low	Mod	High	Low	Mod	High	Low	Mod	High
Population Growth Rate Based on Female Harvest Rate[c]	10%	0.83	0.88	0.93	0.88	0.93	0.99	0.94	0.99	1.05	1	1.06	1.12
	5%	0.87	0.93	0.99	0.92	0.98	1.04	0.99	1.05	1.11	1.05	1.12	1.18
	0%	0.92	0.98	1.04	0.97	1.03	1.1	1.04	1.11	1.17	1.11	1.18	1.25

[a]Poor recruitment at 5% or at 5 juv:100 adults would be adjusted to 33 juv:100 adults. Pregnancy rate 35% at 2.7 kittens/adult with a simulation of 30 females would add 28 kittens to our ratio and would now be 33 juv:100 adults.
Low recruitment at 10% or at 10 juv:100 adults would be adjusted to 46 juv:100 adults. Pregnancy rate 44% at 2.7 kittens/adult with a simulation of 30 females would add 36 kittens to our ratio and would now be 46 juv:100 adults.
Moderate recruitment at 20% or at 20 juv:100 adults would be adjusted to 63 juv:100 adults. Pregnancy rate 53% at 2.7 kittens/adult with a simulation of 30 females would add 43 kittens to our ratio and would now be 63 juv:100 adults.
High recruitment at 30% or at 30 juv:100 adults would be adjusted to 80 juv:100 adults. Pregnancy rate 62% at 2.7 kittens/adult with a simulation of 30 females would add 50 kittens to our ratio and would now be 80 juv:100 adults.

[b]Annual female survival rates in the absence of harvest are categorized as follows:

1) Low=0.79.
2) Moderate=0.84.
3) High=0.89

[c]Percent of female pre-hunt population that is harvested.

East River Management Zone

Research from within the East River Zone has been limited. However, a survey studying the spatial patterns of bobcats in Charles Mix and Brule counties indicated bobcats were most likely to use woodland and shrubland patches (Dart 2021). This type of habitat is very limited in eastern South Dakota and a Low Harvest Strategy should be implemented unless demographic information is collected that suggests a growing population that can support a more liberal harvest strategy.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following statements have guided the development of bobcat management goals and objectives (Table 3) and reflect the collective values of the SDGFP in relation to management of bobcats in South Dakota:

- Wildlife, including bobcats, contributes significantly to the quality of life in South Dakota and therefore must be sustained for future generations.
- Recreational hunting and trapping are legitimate uses of bobcats and must be encouraged and preserved.
- Collaboration among various agencies, including NPS, USFS, BLM, Tribes, and the State, is critical for the future of bobcats and their habitats in South Dakota, and is deserving of recognition and respect.
- Reasonable regulations are necessary for equitable distribution of the benefits of wildlife, including bobcats, and to promote ethical and safe behavior.
- Future of wildlife, including bobcats, depends on a public that appreciates, understands, and supports wildlife and wildlife conservation and in the public's right to participate in decisions related to wildlife issues.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

The goal for bobcat management in South Dakota is to maximize user opportunity while maintaining populations consistent with ecological, social, aesthetic, and economic values of the people of South Dakota and our visitors.

Objectives and Strategies

Objective 1. Annually determine status of bobcat populations.

Strategy A. Where adequate data exist, use statistical population reconstruction and matrix projection models to predict abundance and population growth.

Strategy B. Where feasible, utilize surveys including mark-recapture, hunter harvest, and harvest composition.

Strategy C. Supplement survey data with research findings when available.

Objective 2. Bi-annually review and set bobcat management objectives; use harvest strategies to maximize sustainable recreational opportunity.

Strategy A. Bi-annually review bobcat harvest strategies, which will be used to develop 2-year recommendations based on available biological data, public input, and staff recommendations.

Strategy B. Generally, bobcat harvest will be monitored relative to population estimates, vital rates (when collected), and juvenile-to-adult ratios. We will take into account the following criteria: 1) Statewide population size based upon statistical population reconstruction or other estimates; 2) Vital rates such as adult and kitten survival from research conducted in areas across the state to estimate population growth rates (when collected); and 3) Juvenile-to-adult harvest ratios.

Strategy C. Each bobcat management zone will implement a harvest strategy based on criteria if data are available. Two harvest strategies that can be implemented include: 1) Moderate Harvest- a 52-day season that allows for unlimited bobcat harvest per trapper or hunter; and 2) Low Harvest- a 52-day season that allows for harvesting only one bobcat per trapper or hunter. Strategies will be guided by juvenile-to-adult harvest ratios and demographic data if available.

Objective 3. Maintain, manage, and protect existing bobcat habitat and prey base in South Dakota. Bobcats occur across a wide range of habitat types and makes it difficult to manage for any specific habitats. Therefore, it would be more appropriate to manage for wild turkey and lagomorph (i.e., rabbit) habitat needs as a primary prey base.

Strategy A. Maintain existing partnerships with the USFS, BLM, NPS, private landowners, and other state, local, and private conservation partners to support programs and practices encouraging proper bobcat habitat management on public and private lands.

Strategy B. Manage for wild turkey (*Meleagrididae*) and lagomorph (e.g., eastern cottontail rabbit [*Sylvilagus floridanus*]) habitat needs as a primary prey base.

Objective 4. Continue to use science-based research and surveys to answer questions related to public attitudes towards bobcat management.

Strategy A. Annually evaluate and prioritize research and survey needs for bobcats. Develop research and survey proposals and seek funding opportunities.

Strategy B. Use research and survey findings to guide bobcat management where available and feasible.

Objective 5. The GFP will inform and educate the public on bobcat ecology, management, and research.

Strategy A. By March 2024, provide an electronic copy of the "South Dakota Bobcat Management Plan 2024–2028" on the GFP's website. Printed copies will be available upon request.

Strategy B. Use all available media to educate and inform the public regarding bobcat status, ecology, and harvest.

Table 3. Implementation schedule and primary responsibility, 2024-2028.

Goals, Objectives & Strategies	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Primary Responsibility
GOAL: The goal for bobcat management in South Dakota is to maximize user opportunity while maintaining populations consistent with ecological, social, aesthetic, and economic values of the people of South Dakota and our visitors.						
OBJECTIVE 1: Annually determine status of bobcat populations.						
Strategies						
Strategy A: Where adequate data exist, use statistical population reconstruction and matrix projection models to predict abundance and population growth.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Regional Staff Senior Biologists Game Survey Coordinator
Strategy B: Where feasible, utilize surveys including mark-recapture, hunter harvest, and harvest composition.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Senior Biologists Regional Terrestrial Resource Supervisors
Strategy C: Supplement survey data with research findings when available.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Senior Biologists
OBJECTIVE 2: Bi-annually review and set bobcat management objectives; use harvest strategies to maximize sustainable recreational opportunity.						
Strategies						
Strategy A: Bi-annually review bobcat harvest strategies, which will be used to develop 2-year recommendations based on available biological data, public input, and staff recommendations.	✓		✓		✓	Senior Biologists Regional Terrestrial Resource Supervisors Administration
Strategy B: Generally, bobcat harvest will be monitored relative to population estimates, vital rates (when collected), and juvenile-to-adult ratios. We will take into account the following criteria: 1) Statewide population size based upon statistical population reconstruction or other estimates; 2) Vital rates such as adult and kitten survival from research conducted in areas across the state to estimate population growth rates (when collected); and 3) Juvenile-to-adult harvest ratios.	✓		✓		✓	Senior Biologists Regional Terrestrial Resource Supervisors Administration
Strategy C: Each bobcat management zone will implement a harvest strategy based	✓		✓		✓	Senior Biologists

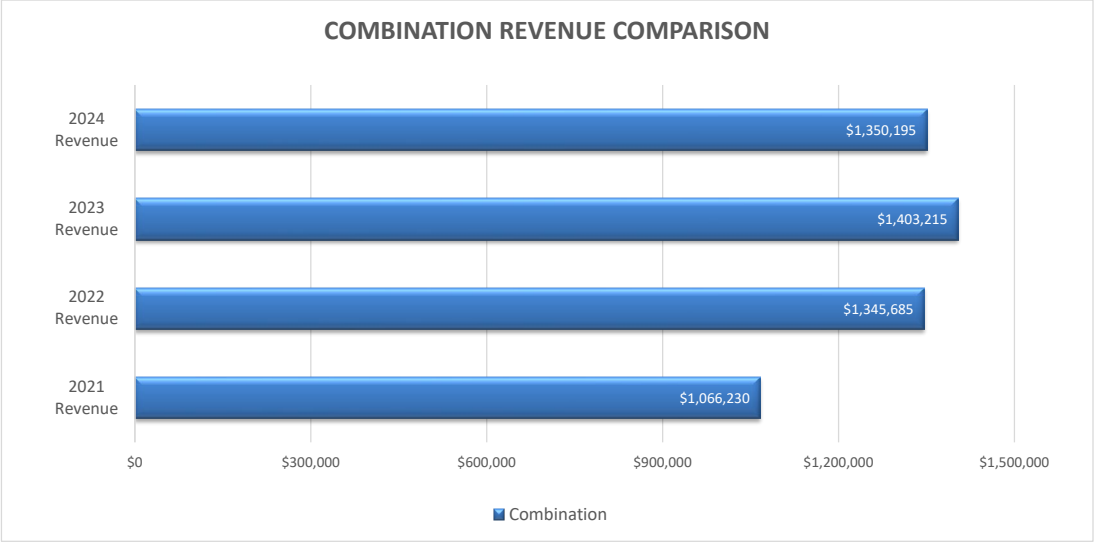
on criteria if data are available. Two harvest strategies that can be implemented include: 1) Moderate Harvest- a 52-day season that allows for unlimited bobcat harvest per trapper or hunter; and 2) Low Harvest- a 52-day season that allows for harvesting only one bobcat per trapper or hunter. Strategies will be guided by juvenile-to-adult harvest ratios and demographic data if available.						Regional Terrestrial Resource Supervisors Administration
OBJECTIVE 3: Maintain, manage, and protect existing bobcat habitat and prey base in South Dakota. Bobcats occur across a wide range of habitat types and makes it difficult to manage for any specific habitats. Therefore, it would be more appropriate to manage for wild turkey and lagomorph (i.e., rabbit) habitat needs as a primary prey base.						
Strategies						
Strategy A: Maintain existing partnerships with the USFS, BLM, NPS, private landowners, and other state, local, and private conservation partners to support programs and practices encouraging proper bobcat habitat management on public and private lands.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Regional Staff Regional Terrestrial Resource Supervisors Administration
Strategy B: Manage for wild turkey (*Meleagrididae*) and lagomorph (e.g., eastern cottontail rabbit [*Sylvilagus floridanus*]) habitat needs as a primary prey base.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Regional Staff Regional Terrestrial Resource Supervisors Administration
OBJECTIVE 4: Continue to use science-based research and surveys to answer questions related to public attitudes towards bobcat management.						
Strategies						
Strategy A: Annually evaluate and prioritize research and survey needs for bobcats. Develop research and survey proposals and seek funding opportunities.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Senior Biologists Regional Terrestrial Resource Supervisors Administration
Strategy B: Use research and survey findings to guide bobcat management where	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Senior Biologists

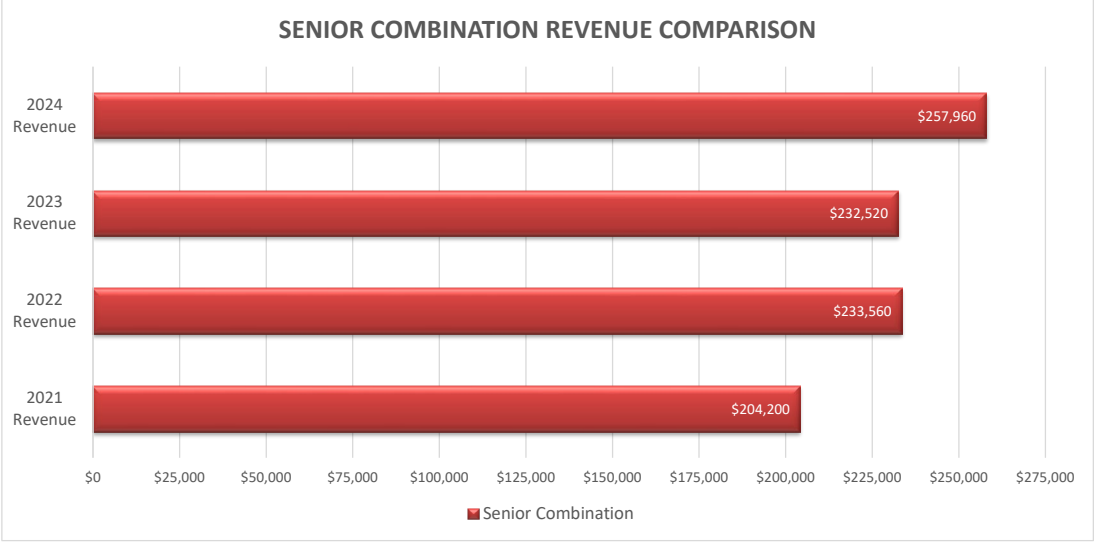
available and feasible.						Regional Terrestrial Resource Supervisors Administration
OBJECTIVE 5: The GFP will inform and educate the public on bobcat ecology, management, and research.						
Strategies						
Strategy A: By March 2024, provide an electronic copy of the "South Dakota Bobcat Management Plan 2024–2028" on the GFP's website. Printed copies will be available upon request.		✓	✓	✓	✓	Communications Administration
Strategy B: Use all available media to educate and inform the public regarding bobcat status, ecology, and harvest.		✓	✓	✓	✓	Communications Administration

COMBINATION LICENSES

December 15 - February 29

License Type	2021	2022	2023	3-yr Avg	2024	2024 Revenue	+/- Licenses 2023 vs 2024	+/- Licenses 3 Yr. Avg vs 2024	+/- Revenue 2023 vs 2024	+/- Revenue 3 Yr. Avg vs 2024	% Change from 3 Yr. Avg
Combination	19,386	24,467	25,513	23,122	24,549	$1,350,195	(964)	1,427	($53,020)	$78,485	6%
Senior Combination	5,105	5,839	5,813	5,586	6,449	$257,960	636	863	$25,440	$34,533	15%
Combination License Totals	**24,491**	**30,306**	**31,326**	**28,708**	**30,998**	**$1,608,155**	**(328)**	**2,290**	**($27,580)**	**$113,018**	**22%**

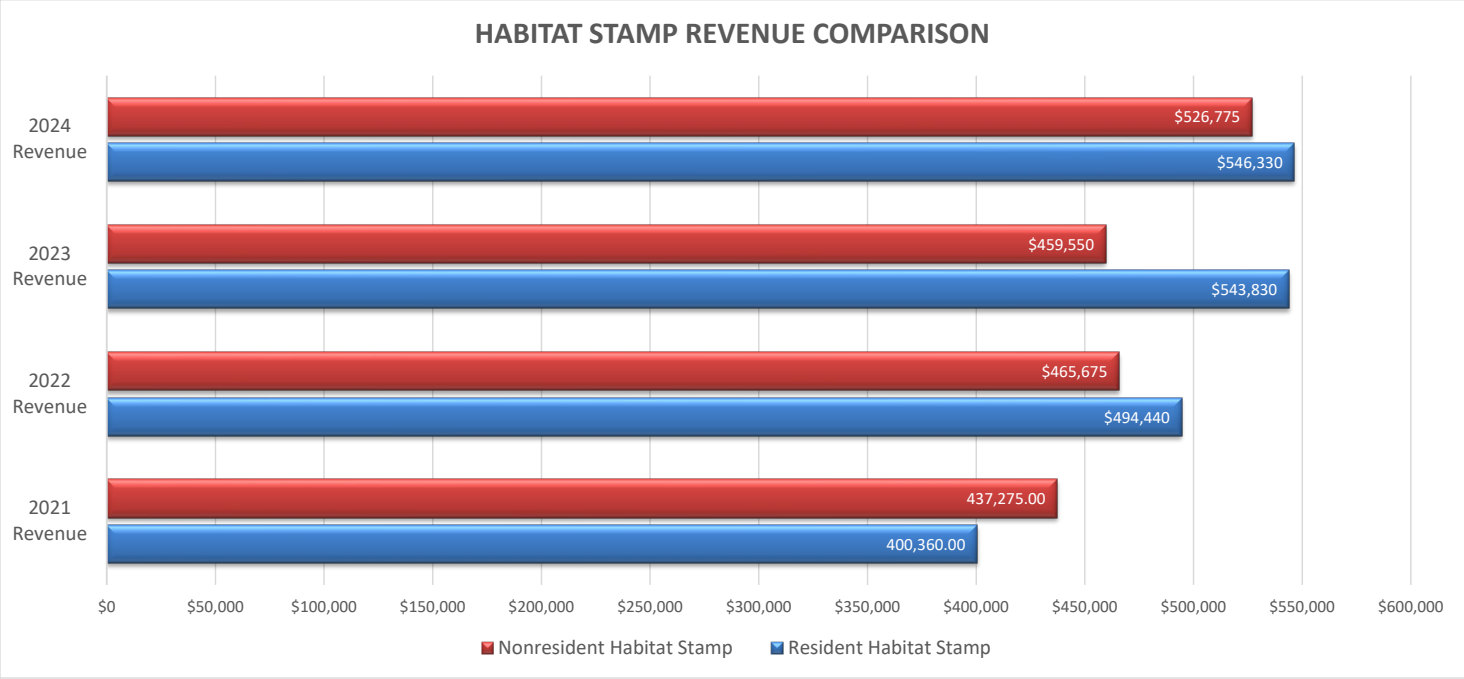




HABITAT STAMP

December 15 - February 29

License Type	2021	2022	2023	3-yr Avg	2024	2024 Revenue	+/- Licenses 2023 vs 2024	+/- Licenses 3 Yr. Avg vs 2024	+/- Revenue 2023 vs 2024	+/- Revenue 3 Yr. Avg vs 2024	% Change from 3 Yr. Avg
Resident Habitat Stamp	40,036	49,444	54,383	47,954	54,633	$546,330	250	6,679	$13,750	$367,327	14%
Nonresident Habitat Stamp	17,491	18,627	18,382	18,167	21,071	$526,775	2,689	2,904	$107,560	$116,173	16%
Habitat Stamp Totals	**57,527**	**68,071**	**72,765**	**66,121**	**75,704**	**$1,073,105**	**2,939**	**9,583**	**$121,310**	**$483,500**	**14%**



SMALL GAME LICENSES

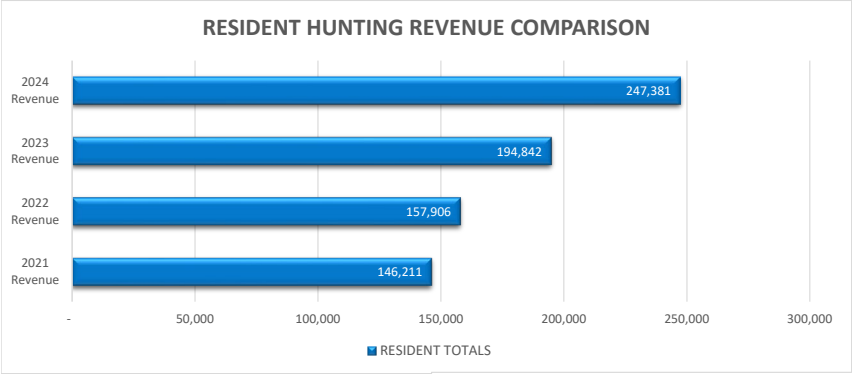
December 15 - February 29

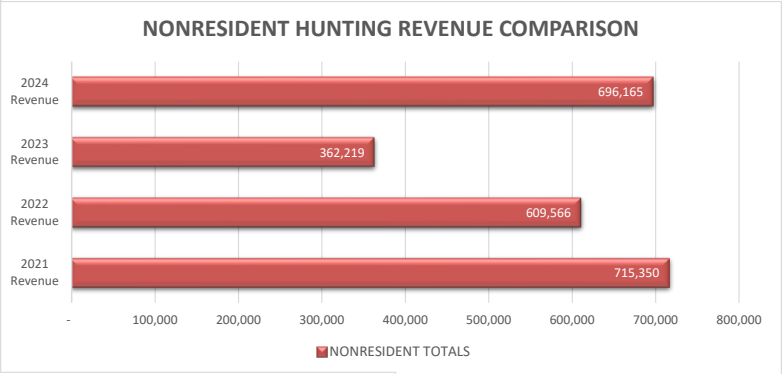
License Type	2021	2022	2023	3-yr Avg	2024	2024 Revenue	+/- Licenses 2023 vs 2024	+/- Licenses 3 Yr. Avg vs 2024	+/- Revenue 2023 vs 2024	+/- Revenue 3 Yr. Avg vs 2024	% Change from 3 Yr Avg
Small Game	937	1,821	3,363	2,040	4,639	$153,087	1,276	2,599	$42,108	$85,756	127%
1-Day Small Game	340	144	79	188	187	$2,244	108	(1)	$1,296	($8)	0%
Youth Small Game	431	616	524	524	679	$3,395	155	155	$775	$1,864	30%
Furbearer	2,347	2,321	2,300	2,323	2,508	$75,240	208	185	$6,240	$5,560	8%
Predator/Varmint	524	992	1,029	848	1,068	$5,340	39	220	$195	$1,098	26%
Migratory Bird Certificate: 3-Duck		99	122	111	96	$480	(26)	n/a	($130)	n/a	n/a
Migratory Bird Certificate: Traditional	7,205	3,584	1,108	3,966	1,519	$7,595	411	(2,447)	$2,055	($12,233)	-62%
RESIDENT TOTALS	**11,784**	**9,577**	**8,525**	**9,999**	**10,696**	**$247,381**	**2,171**	**712**	**$52,539**	**$82,037**	**7.12%**
Small Game	5,110	4,111	2,325	3,849	4,604	$557,084	2,279	755	$275,759	$91,395	20%
Youth Small Game	214	269	145	209	294	$2,940	149	85	$1,490	$847	40%
Shooting Preserve 1-Day Nonresident	136	154	72	121	131	$6,026	59	10	$2,714	$475	9%
Shooting Preserve 5-Day Nonresident	622	776	453	617	658	$50,008	205	41	$15,580	$3,116	7%
Shooting Preserve Annual Nonresident	50	53	44	49	42	$5,082	(2)	(7)	($242)	($847)	-14%
Furbearer	3	3	0	2	4	$1,100	4	2	$1,100	$550	100%
Predator/Varmint	572	523	641	579	758	$30,320	117	179	$4,680	$7,173	31%
Migratory Bird Certificate: 3-Duck		2	8	5	13	$65	5	8	$25	$40	160%
Migratory Bird Certificate: Traditional	57	75	55	62	886	$4,430	831	n/a	$4,155	n/a	n/a
Spring Light Goose	223	288	227	246	834	$37,530	607	588	$33,385	$26,460	239%
Youth Spring Light Goose	7	17	10	11	81	$1,701	71	70	$1,491	$1,463	615%
NONRESIDENT TOTALS	**6,994**	**6,271**	**3,980**	**5,750**	**8,305**	**$696,286**	**4,325**	**1,731**	**$340,137**	**$130,673**	**30.11%**
COMBINED TOTALS	**18,778**	**15,848**	**12,505**	**15,749**	**19,001**	**$943,667**	**6,496**	**3,252**	**$392,676**	**$212,710**	**20.65%**

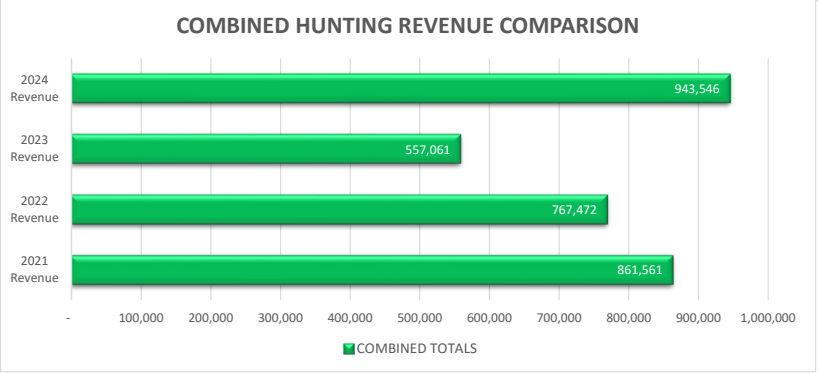
*The license year for Migratory Bird Certificates changed in 2021 so license sales are not comparable between years.

*Migratory Bird Certificates changed from 1 option to 2 in 2022

*Spring Light Goose decreased by $5 when the migratory bird certificate was no longer included.



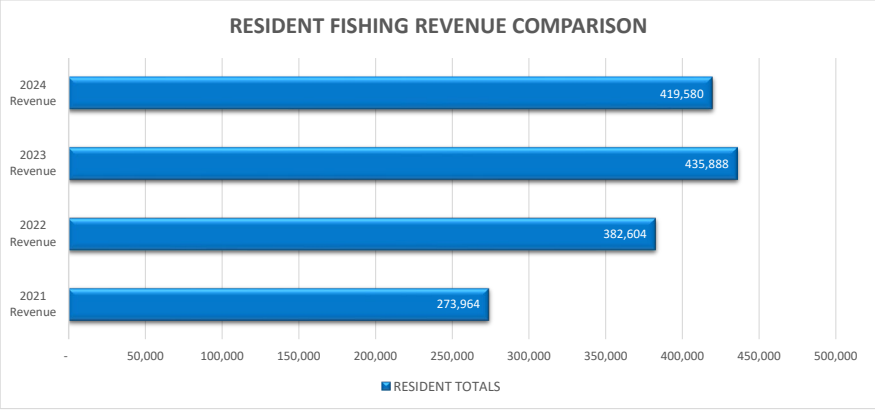


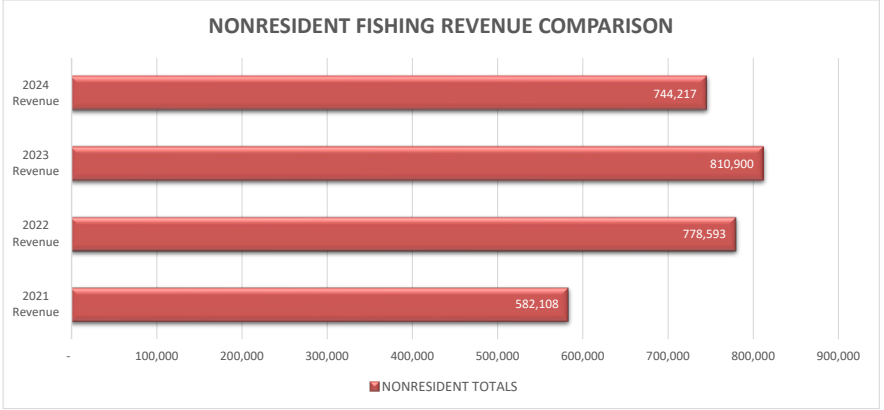


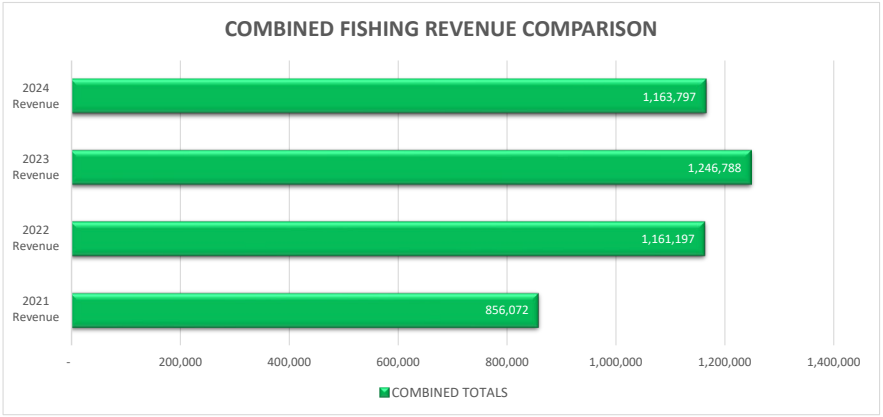
FISHING LICENSES

December 15 - February 29

License Type	2021	2022	2023	3-yr Avg	2024	2024 Revenue	+/- Licenses 2023 vs 2024	+/- Licenses 3 Yr. Avg vs 2024	+/- Revenue 2023 vs 2024	+/- Revenue 3 Yr. Avg vs 2024	% Change from 3 Yr Avg
1-Day Fishing	480	454	570	501	387	$3,096	(183)	(114)	($1,464)	($915)	-23%
Annual Fishing	8,620	12,288	14,070	11,659	13,287	$372,036	(783)	1,628	($21,924)	$45,575	14%
Senior Fishing	2,397	2,909	3,114	2,807	3,704	$44,448	590	897	$7,080	$10,768	32%
RESIDENT TOTALS	**11,497**	**15,651**	**17,754**	**14,967**	**17,378**	**$419,580**	**(376)**	**2,411**	**($16,308)**	**$55,428**	**16.11%**
1-Day Fishing	3,616	3,822	3,375	3,604	2,824	$45,184	(551)	(780)	($8,816)	($12,485)	-22%
3-Day Fishing	2,616	2,825	2,977	2,806	1,978	$73,186	(999)	(828)	($36,963)	($30,636)	-30%
Annual Fishing	6,380	9,148	9,653	8,394	9,341	$625,847	(312)	947	($20,904)	$63,471	11%
NONRESIDENT TOTALS	**12,612**	**15,795**	**16,005**	**14,804**	**14,143**	**$744,217**	**(1,862)**	**(661)**	**($66,683)**	**$20,350**	**-4.47%**
COMBINED TOTALS	**24,109**	**31,446**	**33,759**	**29,771**	**31,521**	**$1,163,797**	**(2,238)**	**1,750**	**($82,991)**	**$75,778**	**5.88%**

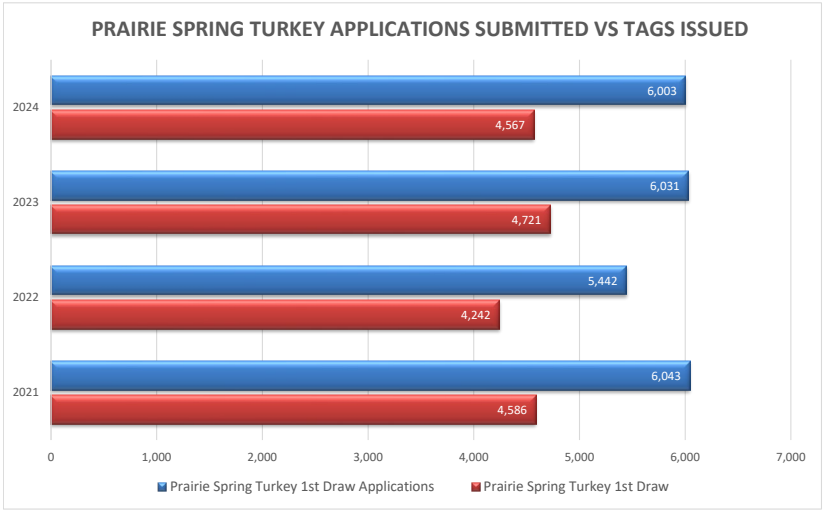


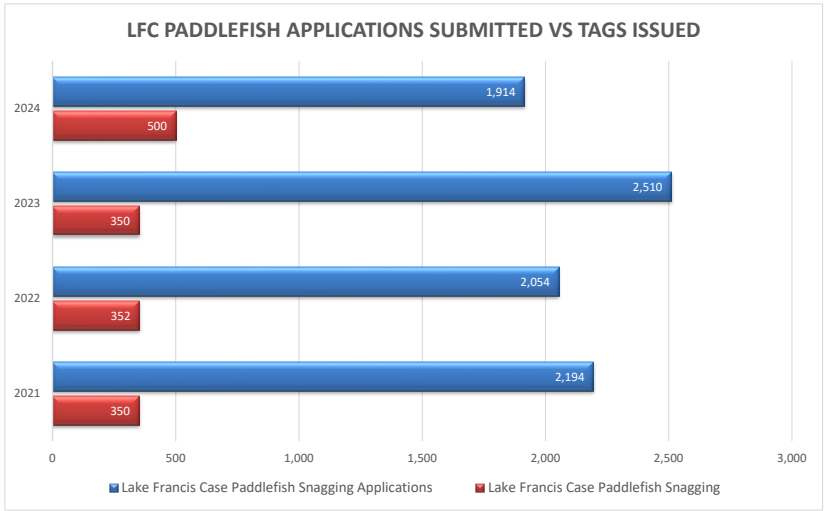


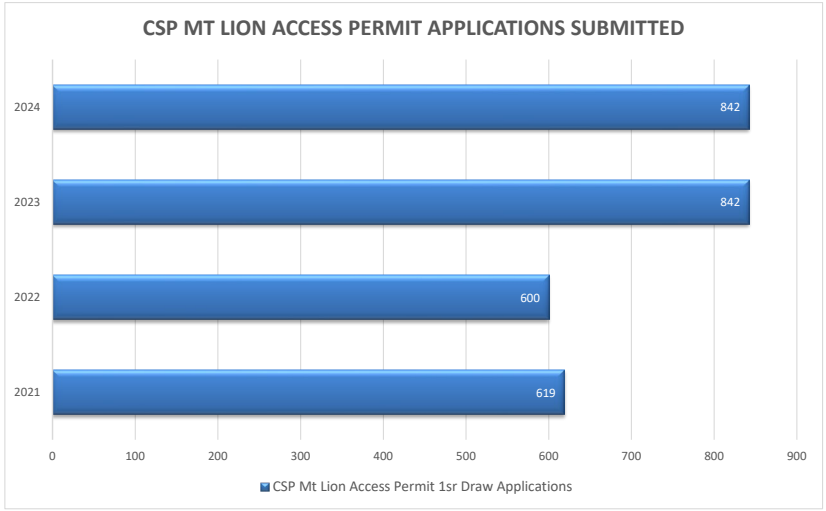


BIG GAME LICENSES

License Type	2021	2022	2023	3-yr Avg	2024	2024 Revenue	+/- Licenses 2023 vs 2024	+/- Licenses 3 Yr. Avg vs 2024	+/- Revenue 2023 vs 2024	+/- Revenue 3 Yr. Avg vs 2024	% Change from 3 Yr Avg
Mountain Lion	2,955	2,711	2,370	2,679	2,570	$71,960	200	(109)	$1,600	($869)	-4%
Prairie Spring Turkey 1st Draw	4,586	4,242	4,721	4,516	4,567	$108,400	(154)	51	($37,300)	$12,880	1%
Lake Francis Case Paddlefish Snagging	350	352	350	351	500	$12,500	150	149	$3,750	$3,733	43%
Resident Black Hills Spring Turkey	1,672	1,230	1,185	1,362	1,313	$32,825	128	(49)	$3,200	($1,233)	-4%
Nonresident Black Hills Spring Turkey	751	627	667	682	934	$93,400	267	252	$26,700	$25,233	37%
Applications Submitted											
Prairie Spring Turkey 1st Draw Applications	6,043	5,442	6,031	5,839	6,003	n/a	(28)	164	n/a	n/a	3%
CSP Mt Lion Access Permit 1sr Draw Applications	619	600	842	687	842	n/a	0	155	n/a	n/a	23%
Lake Francis Case Paddlefish Snagging Applications	2,194	2,054	2,510	2,253	1,914	n/a	(596)	(339)	n/a	n/a	-15%
Custer Spring Turkey Applications	705	622	703	677	608	n/a	(95)	(69)	n/a	n/a	-10%





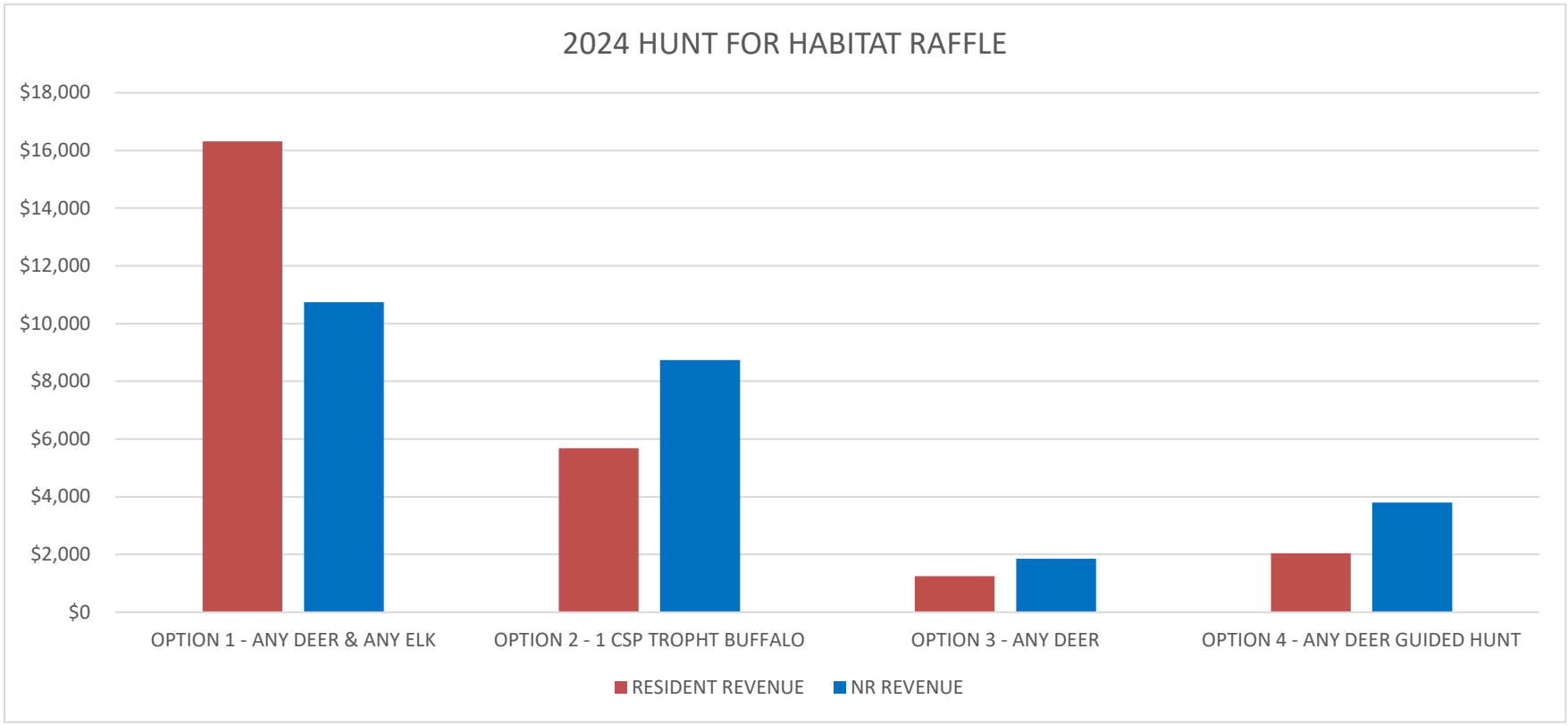


*MTL has historically opened for sale mid-November. In 2023, these were not available until 12/15 & for the 2024 season,

2024 HUNT FOR HABITAT RAFFLE SALES THROUGH FEBRUARY 29, 2024

	RESIDENT COUNT	RESIDENT REVENUE	NR COUNT	NR REVENUE
OPTION 1 - ANY DEER & ANY ELK	1,631	$16,310	537	$10,740
OPTION 2 - 1 CSP TROPHT BUFFALO	568	$5,680	437	$8,740
OPTION 3 - ANY DEER	125	$1,250	93	$1,860
OPTION 4 - ANY DEER GUIDED HUNT	204	$2,040	190	$3,800
	2,528	**$25,280**	**1,257**	**$25,140**

TOTAL REVENUE	TOTAL APPS
$50,420	**3,785**



Public Comments - January 8 to March 4, 2024

Nonresident Waterfowl

Jake Sheffield

Brandon SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

As a SD resident who enjoys waterfowl hunting I directly oppose the increase in non-resident waterfowl licenses. Looking at the data from last year, there were almost half the amount of non-resident hunters to residents and in correlation the non-resident hunter satisfaction scores were higher than the residents. Where is the supporting data that correlates to a need to increase licenses? Simply saying we have a large amount of public hunting areas is not valid data. Additionally, I would like to know how many on the game commission are waterfowl hunters, understand waterfowl habitat, migration patterns, and what hunting pressure does to migratory bird populations. Increasing non-resident hunting without also balancing the scales in other areas is a recipe for poor quality hunting and negative effects for the wildlife.

Doug Welch

Sioux Falls SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Hunting used to be a social event that often built relationships that benefited everyone. The bonus was an outdoor activity that rewarded you with the fowl that one was hunting. As the years have passed it has become more difficult to hunt.
The additional pressure of nonresident hunters will adversely impact resident hunters. I say this because I've witnessed it in both hunting and fishing. The GFP's ultimate quest is unknown for Residents. The impact of nonresident hunting and fishing is not a positive one. I'm not aware of meaningful, positive results for Residents. North Dakota provided an excellent experience when I was in the military, stationed in ND. South Dakota does not provide the same experience.

Ricardo Salas-Moala

Austin TX

Position: oppose

Comment:

I consider it a privilege to hunt in South Dakota. I wish the emphasis was on the quality of the hunts as opposed to adding more hunters. I don't think the data supports adding even more hunters and I think it will ruin the quality of the opportunities in the long term.

Kurt Lemkau

Brandon SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

I would highly discourage the increase number of out of state licenses for waterfowl hunting. My question is are you actually doing research on these items or are you just concerned of trying to increase your profits. Also not sure where you found an increase of public waterfowl hunting land. But pretty soon you won't have anyone hunting anywhere do to the build up or frustrations on trying to go hunting and there is no where to go. I went out at 2 am to try and get on public land this year multiple times and what I would call spot a or b was taken and then it was not even a fun adventure. My other fear is I have a 7 year old son. I believe waterfowl hunting should be in his life but will it be. Hard to say if these kids will even tolerate these issues that I have been encountering the same struggles as I do now.
Vote no to increased out of state licenses.

Curt Tesch

Rosholt SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

I don't know how this blank check Nonresident License increase got passed in the first place. There are too may nonresident waterfowl hunters now. The GFP has not asked for any increases so let's stay where we are.

Jeffrey Liudahl

Grenville SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Way too many nonresident Waterfowl hunters in NE South Dakota!!! We are overrun with nonresident hunters with increasing lack of access to hunting opportunities.

Justin Allen

Pierre SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

I do not support increasing Non Resident waterfowl opportunities/licenses further in South Dakota and urge you as a commissioner to do the same. If we are worried about waterfowl hunters in SD lets work to create more quality opportunities for the resident waterfowl hunters to keep them actively hunting waterfowl. Work to retain and recruit new resident hunters. Creating more opportunities for NR hunters at the expense of residents is counter productive. Just like all forms of hunting, increasing NR hunters increases competition for quality hunting land which in turn increases leasing of land and use of guides/outfitters. Just last year GFP proposed and commission passed a 5% increase to NR waterfowl licenses. Now commission has proposed it again this year even though GFP did not recommend it. As commissioners please remember who you represent. The vast majority sportsman of SD do not want to see any increase to NR waterfowl licenses.

Thank you for your time,

Justin Allen
Pierre, SD

Eric Paulson

Pierre SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Seems like this comes up every year. But the numbers of ducks around don't support the constant increase. Look at the DU surveys annual. Starting in 2015:
2015 - less than 1% increase
2016 - 2% decrease
2017 - 2% decrease
2018 - 13% decrease
2019 - 6% decrease
2020 and 2021 no surveys
2022 - 12% decrease
2023 - 13% decrease

In 2013 DU estimated 49.5 million ducks. In 2023 that DU ducks estimate is 32.320 million. That's a drop of about 35%! The big one, mallards, that everyone wants to hunt dropped 18% from 2022 to 2023 alone! And is down over 47% since 2015 (11.643 million in 2015 and 6.129 million in 2023)

Duck numbers are dropping and hunter numbers are also dropping due to pressure and competition. As the duck numbers drop the opportunities drop and hunters get more congested chasing few birds in the same spot. Talk to your average hunters, not commercial outfits with multiple scouters out driving around covering 1,000 miles a night scouting, 10 years ago your average Joe could go scouting after work and find multiple places to hunt rather easily for the next day before dark. Now you drive around all night and might be lucky to find 1 decent spot. And the odds of you being the only one to find that spot are pretty slim.

We need to stop saying that just because resident numbers are down that this endless opportunity abounds. It doesn't. The opportunity is less now than ever for a variety of reasons. Less ducks, more leasing, etc. Your die hard hunters are still around. They were the ones doing most of the hunting back when numbers were high. The people who quit likely didn't hunt much anyway and didn't impact the pressure a whole lot. Look at when resident hunters spiked in 2014 and the DU duck numbers. Duck numbers were high. As the duck numbers have plummeted so have the resident hunters. https://gfp.sd.gov/UserDocs/nav/WATERFOWL_SUMMARY.pdf

Bird habits have changed. Exhibit A is the Missouri River. Even 10 years ago there were hundreds of thousands of geese around. Now if the entire river hits 100,000 for the year that's big year! 100,000 used to be just what was in one bay! Birds' migratory paths have changed. Waterfowl habits have changed.

I would urge you to not increase non-resident licenses anymore and just give this subject rest for a while. The population numbers given by DU on an annual basis just don't support increases anymore. Until duck numbers bounce back lets stop pushing more nonresidents in which in turn push more residents to hang it up.

Renee Allen

Pierre SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Dear Commission,

As a life long resident of SD I oppose the proposal to increase Non Resident waterfowl licenses and urge you to listen to vast majority resident waterfowl hunters of South Dakota and oppose the proposal as well. NR licenses were increased 5% just last year. In addition what used to be 10 continuous day NR statewide licenses were modified to two 5 day periods a few years ago as well. Between those two measures the days afield by NR waterfowl hunters has increase dramatically in the last 5 years. All of this has been at the expense of the resident hunters. Creating more opportunities for NR hunters at the expense of resident opportunities isn't right. I hope my kids and grandkids that choose to stay in SD get to experience the hunting we all did before its gone to outfitter/guides and NR hunting interests. Please oppose the increase to NR waterfowl licenses.

Renee Allen
Pierre, SD

Quintin Biermann

Groton SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

I am writing to oppose the annual increase in non resident waterfowl licenses. SD has seen a steady increase in NR hunters. Opportunity to hunt and overall hunt quality is dwindling due to increased pressure as well as lack of access due to increased leasing by both outfitters and out of state hunters. I have been an avid outdoorsman my whole life, and enjoy hunting waterfowl with good friends and my children. I hope that by keeping our license numbers in check for non residents we can continue to have great waterfowl hunting for decades to come.

Chris Zabel

Clark SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

I do not support a increase to nr waterfowl licenses. Leasing of land and obtaining permission is already hard enough in northeast sd and Clark Co. Everyone comes for three week when the mallards show up and crowding is a real issue. Please to not support this proposal.

Cody Warner

Webster SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

The waterfowl hunting in South Dakota is second to none. I believe we have the right balance of residents and nonresidents that allow the SDGFP to maintain quality hunting. As we add more NR licenses, I believe the quality of the hunting will decrease. The vast majority of residents and NR's do not want any license increases. Please vote NO.

Phil Hudson

Huron SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

I oppose the 5% increase of nonresident waterfowl licenses. GFP commissioners should be focused on how to improve the quality of the waterfowl hunting experience for residents & our nonresident GUESTS vs allowing more & more people every chance they get. It is a shame how the game commission has treated SD residents on this issue and much trust in the commission has been lost.

Tim Anderson

Mankato MN

Position: oppose

Comment:

Please include in public comment section,

As a Non Resident hunter that has come to South Dakota for over 20 years waterfowl hunting I'm frustrated to see you are trying to increase NR waterfowl licenses again in South Dakota. We have come to SD to enjoy the great hunting. However that has really began to change over the last 10 years. Increased pressure from resident and NRs has increased the hunting pressure on public lands and gaining permission on private land has become much, much harder. Please do not increase NR waterfowl licenses.

Tim

Brett Kyle

Henry SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Please no more NR waterfowl hunters or fisherman. We are being taken over in NE SD by guides, outfitters, leases. It is pushing the locals out quickly. Look out of for the locals not out of staters. No more out of state waterfowl hunting licenses.

Aaron Leingang

Pierre SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

I do not want more NR waterfowl hunters for my son and I to compete with. I am pro NR youth waterfowlers as a recruitment tool but apparently that isn't important to NR waterfowlers as NR youth licenses go unfilled. I think more NR waterfowl tags would only benefit more wealthy NR waterfowlers who use guides and lock up private land so residents can't hunt. Thanks for your consideration

---

Alan Thomas

Huron SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Please do not support the proposal to increase the Non Resident Waterfowl license number by 5%. This proposal is proposed without Waterfowl Management justification.
Do not pass this proposal.
Thank you
Alan Thomas
Huron. SD

Robert Naylor

Chapel Hill NC

Position: oppose

Comment:

I am a nonresident waterfowl hunter, and I've been coming to SD for the past 17 years (even the years I did not get drawn for NR Waterfowl). I also purchase a license for hunting pheasant each year, and sometimes make a second trip to SD just to hunt pheasants. Your amazing state of SD is probably as good as it gets in the entire country for hunting, and that presents a bit of a dilemma with the tradeoff between revenues from hunters and the rights of resident SD hunters and their family traditions over the years. I believe that nonresident waterfowl licenses should be restricted to the level they are currently set, or even reduced in the event resident hunters are seeing too much local pressure in their areas. Pheasant hunting (I assume) is the big revenue generator for the state, and nonresident waterfowl hunting is a very small fraction of that economic generation total. So it does not make any sense at all to ruin the resident waterfowl hunters long traditions and enjoyment of pursuing waterfowl without having to deal with too many nonresident hunters fighting over the same fields. Waterfowl are not disbursed "evenly" like pheasant, and even a small increase in nonresident licenses can make a dramatic negative impact to the enjoyment of the resident local waterfowl hunters. I would gladly sit out a season or two of hunting waterfowl in SD in deference to my SD waterfowl hunting friends in order to protect their rights to this important resource. Of course I would still come to SD and hunt pheasants and take pictures to remember each year. SD would still get my economic impact, and the resident waterfowl hunters would get to continue the great waterfowl hunting opportunities that they have enjoyed over their lifetimes. Its a win-win. Thank you.
Robert Naylor, Chapel Hill, NC.

Paul Hansen

Brookings SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Against additional Non-resident waterfowl licenses. Example last fall on weekend took daughter waterfowl hunting in Webster area. Up extra early and first 3 choices to hunt at all had Minnesota license plates already there. Tough to find places to hunt on weekends when most people can hunt. My guess is you are seeing FEWER RESIDENT waterfowl hunters, Thanks for you time Paul Hansen

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Terry Menning

Aberdeen SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Waterfowl hunting in south dakota is on the same path as what pheasant hunting is now. Paid hunting, guides, lodges. Increasing Waterfowl hunting opportunities for nonresident only compounds this issue. Increased pressure for limited land creates leasing period. Discouraged that the commission seems to be representing out of state hunting interests and revenue over protecting south dakota sportsmans quality opportunities the last several years. Please put yourself in the shoes of the average south dakota sportsman on these issues. Really the folks you are supposed to represent. Please do not increase nonresident Waterfowl licenses anywhere in south dakota.

Mark Smedsrud

Sioux Falls SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

As a lifelong resident that has enjoyed waterfowl hunting for 40 + years with my family and children I am opposed to the proposed increase in NR licenses. We have for years fought to maintain a balance of hunting satisfaction and quality hunting with residents and NR. This history goes back farther than I'm sure most of the commission can remember. For that past number of years mission creep has been evolving with more licenses allowed for the NR. Well as someone that has been a primary public land hunter, but someone not afraid to knock on doors to build relationships, the quality has been eroding again. When I visit the North east part of the state it is over inundated with trucks, trailers and outfitters following the migration. Knocking on doors is becoming harder and harder with the comments from land owners, sorry it's leased for waterfowl. This erosion of outfitters, NR willing to pay these fees and competition for public lands across the state weakens the residents leverage of living here as paying taxes and supporting our local businesses. I urge you to consider the consequences of increasing the NR quota at whose expense and benefit.

Jacob Johnke

Brandon SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Always have issues with non residents, they have no respect for our wildlife. Ran into a bunch of groups last year, they shot their ducks and geese, didn't clean them, put them in the ditch and told me they are a pest bird anyways. .

Kaleb Pint

Sioux Falls SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

No comment text provided.

Kaley Smedsrud

Sioux Falls SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

No comment text provided.

Landon Krohn

Rowena SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

No comment text provided.

Mark Chamberlain

Brandon SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

No comment text provided.

Trent Johnke

Sioux Falls SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

No comment text provided.

Bruce Millikan

Sioux Falls SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

No comment text provided.

Tate Ivers

Brandon SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

No comment text provided.

Rich Visker

Sioux Falls SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

I oppose the increase in non-resident licenses. The success rate of the current system is still good. Regardless of that, an increased number has numerous side effects, more pressure on birds which decreases success rate, more pressure on land owners from additional hunters. The added pressure will also make for lower quality of hunts. It also makes it harder for residents and the current non residents that come here. These consistent license increases are going to drive residents to quit hunting. It makes it harder for all of the current hunters to get permission from a land owner.

All you are looking for is MONEY, not caring about the quality of hunts or anything else. If you want more money, make guides pay for a guide license like some states do.

David Ode

Pierre SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Additional non-resident waterfowl licenses are simply not needed at this time.

William Koupal

Pierre SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

The proposal for an additional increase in nonresident licenses is universally opposed by resident waterfowlers, and for good reason. The proposal increases already intense competition for access, particularly in the eastern part of the state. Passage, in spite of overwhelming opposition, will add to the feeling that the commission is indifferent to the interests of of South Dakota's sportsmen and women.

William Koupal

Pierre SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

The proposal for an additional increase in nonresident licenses is universally opposed by resident waterfowlers, and for good reason. The proposal increases already intense competition for access, particularly in the eastern part of the state. Passage, in spite of overwhelming opposition, will add to the feeling that the commission is indifferent to the interests of of South Dakota's sportsmen and women.

Jeffrey Olson

Rapid City SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Duck survey numbers show a decline in numbers the last two years and the GFP raises the non-resident numbers two year in a row. Please start looking at the science and listen to the sportsmen of our great state.

Charles Dieter

Brookings SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

The residents of South Dakota are tired of being bombarded with nonresident waterfowl hunters. Last year, I had 4 separate incidents where non-residents ruined a hunting trip. The Commission is supposed to protect hunting and fishing for residents of the state. We live here, pay taxes here, buy our things here and raise our kids here. Please do not support the increase in nonresident hunting licenses. If you want to add licenses, add them all to Fall River county rather to where residents hunt. Northeast SD is covered with NR hunters from November 1- Thanksgiving. They all come to a 5-county area during the same time frame. I am asking you to support the residents of the state by voting against the increase. For every NR license added, we will lose at least one resident waterfowl hunter. The SD Waterfowl Association has 500 members and all are opposed to the increase. The SD Wildlife Federation has 4,000 members all opposed to an increase in NR waterfowl licenses. That represents 4,500 people against the increase. How many letters of support have you received?

Other

James Berger See attachment #12233

Pierre SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

The suggested deer tag structure is not good for residents. It’s tough enough to hunt this state as it is. Last year, limiting the number of non-resident public land tags was a step in the right direction. There is a way to ensure the outfitters can make their money while increasing opportunity for residents. Also, it’s time to implement mandatory end of season reporting if you want to hunt the next year so GFP has more complete, accurate data to use in making decisions.

Maximize hunting opportunities for unique hunters and minimize regulation complexity

- Limit buck licenses to 2
- Treat Special Deer as a Unit within either East River Deer or West River Deer
- Remove Draw 3
- Remove Draw 4

Drawing	Resident	Nonresident
Special Deer	Apply for either, but only successful for one. • *If applied ER Special Deer or WR Special Deer, cannot apply for ER Deer or WR Deer in 1st draw, respectively*	
1 & 2	Max. 2 seasons (combination of apps & licenses) • *Cannot apply if previously successful in season*	Max. 2 seasons (combination of apps & licenses) • *Cannot apply if previously successful in season*
~~3~~	~~Apply for any season, provided no license in season~~	
~~4~~	~~Max. 5 applications.~~	
5		

Talking: GFP

Weston Kenyon

Harrison AR

Position: support

Comment:

I am strongly in favor of this beautiful spot remaining open and available for public use. It is being considered as a filming location for a film being written, and closing this runway strip would send the location manager back to square one. We need a small, public use airport. In addition to my personal reason, it sounds as though the recreational pilots who sporadically utilize this asset greatly appreciate it. Would love for it to stay. Thanks.

Joseph Newell

Brandon SD

Position: other

Comment:

SB54 states that my residency is terminated if I :" purchases, or accepts a resident hunting, fishing, or trapping license". Does this mean I lose my residency if I continue to use my lifetime licenses for MN I purchased twenty years ago? This would be totally unfair and unacceptable.

Ron Freeman

Mitchell SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

I oppose the proposal to increase the number of non-resident waterfowl licenses. As a life long resident of SD and avid waterfowl hunter, I have seen the numbers of non resident waterfowl licenses increase on a regular basis in the past 10 years. We are in the midst of a long term drought which reduces the number of lakes and sloughs we can hunt. Adding more non resident licenses will only increase the hunting pressure on the remaining lakes and resident hunters. Thank you for your consideration and i urge you to vote no on this proposal.

Christopher Lynch

Sedro Woolley WA

Position: support

Comment:

Please continue Custer State airport. The value of strips like this is huge because they can never be cost effectively built again. I have flown to your state and will do so again, if the airports remain open. Thank you.

Jeff Miller

Lance Creek SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Please don’t shut down the Custer state park airport. We love coming and airplane camping there. Not many places besides Idaho to fulfill that adventure. Please keep open.

Jack Horn

Erie CO

Position: oppose

Comment:

No comment text provided.

Mike Brownlie

Chandler AZ

Position: oppose

Comment:

Please do not close airport camping at your airport

Bret Robertson

Box Elder SD

Position: support

Comment:

I believe with the Black Hills not hitting the quota for years, there should be a lottery draw for the forest district to allow a certain amount of mountain lions to be harvested to assist with other wildlife #s! Also putting a cat up in a tree gives a hunter a opportunity to observe the cat, and can clearly see if it’s a female with cubs!

Chris Kenefick

Omaha NE

Position: oppose

Comment:

I oppose closing/decommissioning Custer State Park airport.

Harvey Hampton

Simms MT

Position: oppose

Comment:

I oppose the consideration of shutting down the airport. “It’s better to have and not need than need and not have”. I don’t know how SD aviation fuel tax dollars are spent but the airport should be kept in a useable condition. Given the stated amount of use, I personally wouldn’t spend millions on it but I would keep it in an operable state

---

Maurice Brandt

Custer SD

Position: other

Comment:

I filled out your PD survey online months ago, when it first came out. Since then, I have received two postcards from you requesting me to fill out the same survey. Why?

Clarke Crawford

Flagstaff AZ

Position: support

Comment:

I support keeping Custer State Park Airport open. My wife and I fly to Custer State Park Airport at least 1-2 times every year. We enjoy this airport as our exclusive access point to the state park and the Black Hills. We have camped, at the airport, biked from the airport, and been picked up at the airport by hotels. This is a big asset for the area and South Dakota. It would be a huge loss to the state and local area if a way can't be found to keep it open.

Jim Gruber

Estelline SD

Position: other

Comment:

I would like to comment. As a guide you cannot hunt on any of our million acres of public land. But I can guide fishing on our limited public lakes without even a license. N east sd basically is concentrated to Thompson poinsett waubay and bitter they rape our lakes without any contribution to our shrinking lakes. Why?

Jeff Baugh

Brigham City UT

Position: oppose

Comment:

I'm writing to oppose the closure of the Custer State Park Airport. I discovered this airport while vacationing in the area last summer (it was a great trip). My wife and I both commented on returning in the airplane and making a camping trip out of it. Backcountry airports like this are a true treasure to the flying community. Please keep it open.. thanks

---

Teddy J Ulrich

Glenwood WI

Position: support

Comment:

Hound hunting is a traditional sport such as golfing bowling or any other sport

---

Dale Boyer

Elkton SD

Position: other

Comment:

Please don't close Custer airport. I enjoyed my stop there a few years ago and am planning on coming back this year

---

Karen Haynes

Chamberlain SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

I am aware that there is not currently a comment period regarding the Nest Predator Program but I am choosing to stand in opposition to that program which starts, again, soon. Thousands of animals have been slaughtered since this program began and many of them no doubt leaving their young behind when they are killed. Yet, the state is not counting pheasants and there is no evidence that this program improves pheasant habitat at all. In fact, there is such an increase in farm raised pheasants there is probably very little effect. "Hunting and trapping heritage" is not appropriate in 2024 and children should be outside playing instead of killing animals.

Thank you for your consideration.

Austin Howard

Rapid City SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

I am opposed to SB 56. I do not support allowing all classes of e-bikes on the Mickelson trail due to the associated safety issues this would cause.

Lisa Pustejovsky

Rapid City SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

I would like your department to withdrawal the request thru SB 56 to allow Class 2 and 3 E-bikes onto the Mickelson Trail. I use that trail every Spring, Summer and Fall and believe it would be a safety hazard on the trail. These are motorized vehicles in my opinion and have no place being on a trail that is for exercise and enjoying the beautiful Black Hills. Just the other day I was walking my dog on the bike path in Rapid City and almost got run down by a class 2 E-bike because of the speed they were going. This is a bad idea for the Mickelson Trail or any trail.

Taffy Howard See attachment #12285

Rapid City SD

Position: other

Comment:

No comment text provided.

Darva Rye

Gillette WY

Position: other

Comment:

E-bikes on the Mickelson Trail. Our family is part of a trust property in the Mystic Valley. The Mickelson Trail is a historical trail. Listed in the top 10 nationwide. What possible financial gain can offset the preservation of this special, unique and beautiful area. 109
miles that is not duplicated anywhere in the world. Our family was associated with the "making" of the trail from its conception, corresponding with our late governor Mickelson. It was presented as a historical preservation idea to the adjoining landowners who wished to have their portion of the abandoned railroad right-of-way restored to their adjoining properties. It was presented as a SAFE, NON MOTORIZED, hiking, biking, running, equestrian trail for ALL families of ALL ages. We strongly OBJECT to the use of e-bikes of any kind on the Mickelson Trail at all, but apparently class 1 e-bikes have been allowed without public comment. We have already experienced the rudeness of e-bikers who think they "own the road". PLEASE then, DO NOT ALLOW any further expansion to class 2 or class 3 e-bikes on the trail .

Dear GF&P Commissioners, 2 March 24

I am writing to you out of concern for what is happening regarding the Mickelson Trail.

"A Piece of Heaven," that's how the PBS documentary describes the ***non-motorized, multi-use*** Mickelson Trail running 109 miles from Deadwood to Edgemont (please watch it if you have not already). Dedicated in 1991 and completed in 1998, it was designed for walking, jogging, horseback riding, and regular biking in the summers and snowshoeing or cross-country skiing in the winter (with limited access for snowmobilers to give them access to the network of snowmobiling trails in the northern Hills). Going from around 5,000 annual users to between 65,000-70,000, the trail has exploded in popularity, being named in 2013 as one of the top 10 rails to trails in the world (remember, this is all while e-bikes were available but were never allowed on this trail)!

Sold commercially in 1997, e-bikes were never allowed on the Mickelson until a couple years ago when, without any public comment period (and in violation of federal law), the new GF&P Secretary changed the usage of the trail and allowed Class 1 and 3 e-bikes (thankfully all I and my friends have seen on the trail though are Class 1s and most people I spoke with believed that was all that was allowed, either that or there were some people I spoke with who believe they are all still illegal and the people riding them are on the trail illegally).

Then this year, GF&P brought SB 56, a bill to allow ALL classes of e-bikes. Thankfully, it was amended in Senate Ag to only Class 1s and easily passed the Senate. The reason it so easily passed is because safety and common sense thankfully won out over what seems to be GF&P's sole concern of more users and more records to be broken and more money. GF&P refused to accept this though and asked House Ag to table it. They stated they plan to "study" the issue and come back again next year essentially with the same bill. One GF&P employee stated they have a group of "e-bikers breathing down their neck." E-bikers do not have preference over all the other users though, the Mickelson is not a bike path, intended only for bikers.

E-bikes though have increased exponentially on the trail as rental shops have popped up everywhere renting them. Thankfully, the rental shop and tour company owners I spoke to say they are only renting Class 1s and not the faster and more dangerous Class 3s. Why? Primarily for safety on the trail.

Class 1 e-bikes are called "low-speed pedelecs" or low-speed pedal electric vehicles. The motor assists the rider pedaling until a speed of 20 mph is reached and the motor stops assisting. Class 2 e-bikes can be completely throttle-driven, with the motor reaching speeds up to 20 mph, sustained. Class 3 e-bikes are back to being pedal-assist, but the motor will assist up to 28 mph. Class 3s are called "***speed*** pedelecs," and are typically sold as a "an urban commuter" bike or a "zippy errand runner," they are NOT typically sold for riding multi-use trails like the Mickelson. Why GF&P would ever think it's okay to put Class 3s on a trail where families with little kids are out walking is beyond me. I've had Class 3 e-bikes fly by me on other trails while I'm out jogging and not only do they about give me a heart attack (because they are so quiet and come up going 30 mph out of nowhere)

Horseback riders go about 4 mph, walkers between 3-5 mph, regular bikers average 10 mph. Force equals mass times acceleration, and with the heavier weight of an e-bike and the faster speed, the impact of an e-bike rider on a walker is ***4-5 times greater*** than the impact of a regular biker. People are literally dying due to collisions between walkers and e-bikes.

According to railstotrails.org, "Speed is fundamental to safety…making it the single most important factor in determining trail compatibility. Speed influences both the ***likelihood of crashes*** and the ***degree of harm*** when they happen."

NO ONE is being stopped from riding the Mickelson if it were to be limited to Class 1s, they are simply being told they have to ride a slower e-bike (that is more compatible with the other users) than they may want to. And posting a speed limit sign does nothing to regulate someone's speed, whereas limiting the class of e-bikes on the trail DOES (otherwise why not allow dirt bikes or mopeds and trust they obey the "speed limit"?!).

Many multi-use recreational trails limit e-bikes to Class 1. Just a couple examples are the Route of the Hiawatha in northern Idaho and the Great Northern Historical Trail in MT.

GF&P argues they can't enforce a ban on classes of e-bikes. Most e-bikes on the trail are rentals, and we can trust these businesses to obey the law. As for e-bikes owners, they know to check the trail before they ride to see if ANY e-bikes are allowed, and we will trust they also behave responsibly. We also have a trail patrol. They can easily see if the e-bike has a throttle (as Class 2s and 3s do) and educate the rider on what's allowed or not allowed, then if they are on a Class 2 or 3, they can politely ask them to disengage their throttle, keep their speed down, and make sure next time they ride they are on a Class 1. Do we not pass any laws simply because we don't want to mess with enforcing them? Of course not.

When Peter Norbeck designed the roads through the Hills, he was asked about the pigtails and switchbacks, and he replied, "It's scenic. You're not supposed to drive here at 60 mph, and to do the scenery justice, you should drive at no more than 20, to do it full justice you should ***get out and walk***." It seems GF&P has forgotten just how beautiful and special our Black Hills are and in their pursuit of ever-more crowds and ever-more money they are going to kill the goose that laid the golden egg.

The Mickelson Trail truly is "a piece of Heaven" that we have been blessed with, meant as a place to slow down, spend time with family, and enjoy the blessings God has given us.

I am asking you, the GF&P Commission members, to maintain the intended use of the Mickelson, because if we do not help conserve our natural resources for future generations (and first and foremost should be future generations of SOUTH DAKOTANS, THEY should be our first priority), they will be gone forever. E-bikes ARE motorized, and as such go against the intended use of the trail and go against the way it has been used for decades. I would rather NO motorized vehicles/bikes be allowed on the trail, but I and most everyone I know who uses the trail are willing to compromise with Class 1s…but anything else is unwise, reckless, and simply not safe.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. There are a lot of South Dakota citizens who are concerned the Mickelson is headed in a direction that will lead to it no longer being an enjoyable recreational trail for families to get out and enjoy. I'm hoping you will help prevent that from happening.

Taffy Howard
Rapid City
605-381-0593
taffyhoward33@gmail.com

DEPARTMENT OF GAME, FISH, AND PARKS
NOTICE OF REGULAR MEETING

This meeting will be held in person, via zoom/conference call, and Livestream. Listen to the meeting beginning at 1:00 p.m. CST via Livestream at https://www.sd.net/remote1/ or join via zoom by clicking on the link below. Depending on your application, you may be required to enter the meeting ID and password. Remember to **enter your display name and mute your microphone**. To help keep background noise and distractions to a minimum, make sure you **mute your microphone and turn off your video** when you are not speaking.

Thursday, March 7, 2024 starting at 1 pm CST and Friday, March 8, 2024 starting at 8 am CST,
Zoom Meeting Link https://state-sd.zoom.us/j/92827772568?pwd=cHByUFlQNi8rRXJ0dGlEazNRbjBqZz09
or join via conference call Dial 1 253 205 0468 Meeting ID: 928 2777 2568 Passcode: 421262

Public Input: To provide comments, join the meeting in person, via zoom, or via conference call per the info above. To conduct the public hearing and/or open forum as efficiently as possible, we ask those wishing to testify to **register by 1:00 pm CST the day of the meeting by email to** Liz.Kierl@state.sd.us. **Testifiers should provide their full names, whom they represent, their city of residence, and which proposed topic they will address.**

Written comments can be submitted at https://gfp.sd.gov/forms/positions/. To be included in the public record, comments must include the complete name and city of residence and meet the **submission deadline of seventy-two hours before the meeting (not including the day of the meeting).**

Dated this 29th day of February 2024.

s/b Stephanie Rissler

Stephanie Rissler, GFP Commission Chair