



Commission Meeting Minutes

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks

523 E Capitol Avenue | Pierre, South Dakota 57501

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

REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING

Call Meeting to Order

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

1. Conflict of Interest Disclosure

[Action Item]

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

2. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

[Action Item]

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

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

3. Additional Commissioner Salary Days

[Action Item]

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

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

4. License List Request

[Action Item]

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

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

5. New Staff Introductions

[Info Item]

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

Public Hearing

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

Agenda Item #11: General License Provisions

No testimony provided.



Commission Meeting Minutes

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks

523 E Capitol Avenue | Pierre, South Dakota 57501

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

Agenda Item #12: Spring and Fall Turkey Seasons

No testimony provided.

Agenda Item #13: Private Shooting Preserves

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

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

Open Forum

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Commission Meeting Minutes

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks

523 E Capitol Avenue | Pierre, South Dakota 57501

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

6. Petition 259 Archery Paddlefish Transport

[Action Item: Petition]

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

7. Petition 260 Residency Mountain Lion Hunting Requirements

[Action Item: Petition]

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

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

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

RESOLUTION 26-03

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

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

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

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

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

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



Commission Meeting Minutes

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks

523 E Capitol Avenue | Pierre, South Dakota 57501

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

8. Fishing Seasons and Regulations Proposals

[Action Item: Proposal]

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

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

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

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

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

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



Commission Meeting Minutes

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks

523 E Capitol Avenue | Pierre, South Dakota 57501

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

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

9. Bobcat Season and Population Status

[Action Item: Proposal]

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

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

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

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

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

11. General License Provisions

[Action Item: Finalization]

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

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

12. Spring and Fall Turkey Seasons

[Action Item: Finalization]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Commission Meeting Minutes

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks

523 E Capitol Avenue | Pierre, South Dakota 57501

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

Recommended 2027 and 2028 Spring Turkey Licenses.

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

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

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



Commission Meeting Minutes

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks

523 E Capitol Avenue | Pierre, South Dakota 57501

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

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

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

Recommended 2026 and 2027 Fall Turkey Licenses.

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

Table

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

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

13. Private Shooting Preserves

[Action Item: Finalization]

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



Commission Meeting Minutes

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks

523 E Capitol Avenue | Pierre, South Dakota 57501

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

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

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

14. Dock 44 Update

[Info Item: Parks]

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

15. Marketing Update to Promote Camping

[Info Item: Parks]

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

16. Northeast Region Park Projects

[Info Item: Parks]

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

17. Reservation Customer Service Review Process

[Info Item: Parks]

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

18. RTP Project Selection

[Info Item: Parks]

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



Commission Meeting Minutes

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks

523 E Capitol Avenue | Pierre, South Dakota 57501

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

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

19. Events Manager Program and Summer Events

[Info Item: Parks]

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

20. June and YTD Camping and Revenue Report

[Info Item: Parks]

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

21. Elk Raffle License

[Action Item: Wildlife]

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

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

22. Roy Lake GPA Prescribed Burn Results

[Info Item: Wildlife]

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

23. Goose Depredation

[Info Item: Wildlife]

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



Commission Meeting Minutes

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks

523 E Capitol Avenue | Pierre, South Dakota 57501

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

24. Big Sioux River CREP/Riparian Buffer Initiative

[Info Item: Wildlife]

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

25. Coyote Bounty Results

[Info Item: Wildlife]

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

26. Plant Identification and Management Workshop

[Info Item: Wildlife]

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

27. Law Enforcement Case Highlight

[Info Item: Wildlife]

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

28. License Sales Report

[Info Item: Wildlife]

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

25. Adjourn

[Action Item]

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

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

Submitted respectfully,

Kevin Robling, Department Secretary