



Commission Meeting Minutes

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks

523 E Capitol Avenue | Pierre, South Dakota 57501

March 6-7, 2025 | Ramkota Convention Center | Pierre, SD

REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING

Call Meeting to Order

Chair Rissler called the meeting to order at 1 pm CST at the Ramkota Convention Center in Pierre, SD on March 6, 2025. Commissioners Stephanie Rissler, Jim White, Travis Bies, Jon Locken, Julie Bartling, and Travis Theel were present, with Bruce Cull joining virtually. With seven 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 90 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 January 2025 meeting. Minutes are available at <https://gfp.sd.gov/commission/archives/>.

MOTIONED BY BIES, SECONDED BY BARTLING TO APPROVE THE JANUARY 2025 REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES. The motion carried unanimously.

3. Additional Salary Days [Action Item]

Chair Rissler called for additional salary days from the Commissioners. Additional days were submitted for approval for Commissioner Bartling for two days, Commissioner White for two days, and Commissioner Rissler for one day.

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

4. New Staff Introductions [Info Item]

Jeff VanMeeteren, Director of Parks & Recreation, introduced two new employees: A) Paxton Steen - Park Maintenance Technician at Fort Sisseton State Park; and B) Todd Novotny – Park Maintenance Technician at Spring Creek Recreation Area.

Tom Kirschenmann, Director of Wildlife, introduced three new employees: A) Brant Helman – Resource Biologist at Cleghorn Springs Fish Hatchery; B) Shandi Chrysler – Senior Secretary at Ft. Pierre Licensing Office; and C) Jessica Speiser – Wildlife Diversity Biologist.

5. Legislative Session Update [Info Item]

Deputy Secretary Simpson gave a brief update on the legislative items being brought during the 2025 legislative session.

6. Habitat Plate [Info Item]

Nick Harrington, Communications Manager, provided an update regarding the new Habitat Conservation License plates. These became available Monday, March 3, and have sold 40 decal sets as of the Commission update. Harrington provided a step-by-step process on how to obtain both the license plates themselves and the accompanying decals as well as covered questions that have been received prior to the plates becoming available.



Commission Meeting Minutes

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks

523 E Capitol Avenue | Pierre, South Dakota 57501

March 6-7, 2025 | Ramkota Convention Center | Pierre, SD

Public Hearing

Senior Staff Attorney Nick Michels opened the floor at 2:01 CST for discussion from those in attendance in matters of importance to them that are listed on the agenda as finalization. No testimony was provided by the public, so the Public Hearing was closed at 2:03 pm CST.

Open Forum

Senior Staff Attorney Nick Michels opened the floor at 2:03 pm CST for discussion from those in attendance in matters of importance to them that are listed on the agenda not as a finalization.

2:04 pm: Mark Oslund of Black Hawk, SD testified in person in opposition to the waterfowl hunting season.

2:07 pm: Matt Tucker of Rosebud, SD representing the Rosebud Sioux Tribe testified in person in opposition of the prairie elk hunting season.

2:10 pm: Chalmer Combellick of Green Grass, SD representing the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe testified in person in opposition of the prairie elk hunting season.

2:14 pm: Ben Janis of Lower Brule, SD representing the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe Wildlife, Fish and Recreation Department testified in person in opposition of the prairie elk hunting season.

2:17 pm: Isaac Johnson of Chamberlain, SD representing the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe Wildlife, Fish, and Recreation Department testified in person in opposition of the prairie elk hunting season.

2:21 pm: Dalton Grassel of Reliance, SD representing the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe Wildlife, Fish, and Recreation Department testified in person in opposition of the prairie elk hunting season.

2:24 pm: Tip Taylor of Presho, SD testified in person in opposition of the prairie elk hunting season.

2:26 pm: Nancy Hilding of Black Hawk, SD representing Prairie Hills Audobon Society testified virtually in opposition of prairie mountain lion hunting and the nest predator bounty program.

2:29 pm: Julie Anderson of Rapid City, SD testified virtually in opposition of prairie mountain lion hunting and big horn sheep hunting.

2:31 pm: Brad Tisdall of Rapid City, SD representing South Dakota Houndsmen testified in person in support of prairie mountain lion hunting.

2:33 pm: Ben Dorman of Kennebec, SD testified in person in support of the prairie elk hunting season.

2:34 pm: Brad Karlen of Kennebec, SD representing Karlen Ranch testified in person in support of the prairie elk hunting season.

2:35 pm: Tyler Frederick of Kennebec, SD testified in person in support of the prairie elk hunting season.

The open forum closed at 2:37 pm CST.

7. #234 – To Implement a Regulated Season on Jack Rabbits

[Action Item: Petition]

Tom Riddle of Mitchell, SD submitted petition #234 in which requested the Commission require the change of implementing a regulated season on Jack Rabbits.

Wildlife Director Kirschenmann introduced the petitioner and Mr. Riddle provided a summary of reasons why he desires the regulated season on Jack Rabbits. Kirschenmann then provided some background



Commission Meeting Minutes

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks

523 E Capitol Avenue | Pierre, South Dakota 57501

March 6-7, 2025 | Ramkota Convention Center | Pierre, SD

information and shared a few explanations why the department is providing a recommendation of denial. Those included using habitat conservation as a primary management measure to promote better populations and the conflict of state statute by approving this rule.

MOTIONED BY BARTLING, SECONDED BY THEEL TO DENY PETITION #234. Yea Votes (4) Rissler, Bartling, Locken, and Theel. Nay Votes (2) Bies and White. The motion did not pass. Tom Kirschenmann, Director of Wildlife, offered to have an information item regarding Jack Rabbits presented at a future Commission Meeting to provide further detail on the species. Roll call was subsequently held. Yea Votes (7) Rissler, Bies, Bartling, Cull, Locken, Theel, and White. The motion to deny carried unanimously.

RESOLUTION 25-06

WHEREAS, Tom Riddle of Mitchell, South Dakota, submitted a Petition to the Game, Fish and Parks Commission (Commission) dated March 4, 2025, requesting that the Game, Fish and Parks Commission implement a regulated season for jackrabbits (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 to Tom Riddle; and

WHEREAS, habitat is the primary factor and ultimately responsible for regulating jackrabbit population growth. Other factors such as predation and variable weather can affect population growth, but are secondary and closely related to habitat quality, not independent drivers of jackrabbit populations; and

WHEREAS, loss of enrolled acres in the Conservation Reserve Program and grassland conversion to agriculture are the primary reasons for jackrabbit population declines; and

WHEREAS, hunter harvest in recent decades likely has negligible impacts to jackrabbit populations at broader geographic scales across all of South Dakota; and

WHEREAS, the requested season change does conflict with current state law pertaining to night hunting which allows harvest year round. Administrative rule cannot supersede statute; and

WHEREAS, the department will bring forward a future information item to a scheduled Commission meeting to further discuss information around jackrabbit populations and potential season structure opportunities within statute and administrative rule.

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.



Commission Meeting Minutes

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks

523 E Capitol Avenue | Pierre, South Dakota 57501

March 6-7, 2025 | Ramkota Convention Center | Pierre, SD

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, Tom Riddle of Mitchell, South Dakota.

MOTIONED BY BIES, SECONDED BY BARTLING TO ADOPT RESOLUTION 25-06. The motion carried unanimously.

8. Bear Butte Public Use Restriction

[Action Item: Finalization]

Jeff VanMeeteren, Director of Parks & Recreation, asked the Commission to finalize the rule prohibiting the leaving of human remains at Bear Butte. In 2002, at the request of the tribal groups representing the Bear Butte forum, the Commission approved this same rule as proposed. In 2019 as part of a Dept. rule cleanup process this rule was inadvertently repealed. Bear Butte is viewed as a spiritual worship area by the various tribal groups and the spreading or leaving of human remains at Bear Butte is not an acceptable spiritual and cultural practices. The rule simply reinstates what was formerly in rule. No public comments were received. The rule (41:03:01:33) was finalized.

MOTIONED BY BIES, SECONDED BY WHITE TO APPROVE THE FINALIZATION. The motion carried unanimously.

9. Waterfowl Hunting Season

[Action Item: Proposal]

Andrew Norton, Wildlife Program Administrator, presented proposals for waterfowl hunting season. A summary was provided reviewing the current Waterfowl Season proposals that are scheduled to be finalized in April. Proposed changes include an increase from 1 to 3 for the pintail daily bag and a reduction in the early blue-winged teal season from 16 to 9 days. There were also proposals to remove the Special Canada Goose Season in Bennett County and combine Bennett County goose hunting regulations into the Unit 2 Canada Goose Season.

NO ACTION WAS TAKEN AS THERE WERE NO CHANGES TO THE PROPOSAL. FINALIZATION WILL TAKE PLACE IN APRIL 2025.

10. Prairie Mountain Lion Hunting

[Action Item: Proposal]

John Kanta, Terrestrial Section Chief, presented the proposal for the mountain lion hunting season. Proposed changes include to allow the initiation of the pursuit of a mountain lion with dogs outside the Black Hills Fire Protection District to occur anywhere, where permitted by the landowner. The commission made an amendment to the proposal to exclude examples of closed areas Wind Cave National Park, Jewel Cave National Park, and Mount Rushmore National Memorial.

MOTIONED BY BIES, SECONDED BY THEEL TO ADOPT THE PROPOSAL FOR APRIL FINALIZATION. The motion carried unanimously.

11. Boating Safety

[Action Item: Proposal]

Law enforcement section chief Sam Schelhaas presented a second reading of a proposal to adjust two boating rules. The first rule addressed was 41:04:05:02.01 which pertains to special use personal floatation devices. The second rule addressed was 41:04:05:03 which pertains to fire extinguishers on boats. Both proposed changes would harmonize the administrative rule with the Federal regulations.



Commission Meeting Minutes

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks

523 E Capitol Avenue | Pierre, South Dakota 57501

March 6-7, 2025 | Ramkota Convention Center | Pierre, SD

NO ACTION WAS TAKEN AS THERE WERE NO CHANGES TO THE PROPOSAL. FINALIZATION WILL TAKE PLACE IN APRIL 2025.

12. Big Horn Sheep Hunting Season & Population Status Report [Action Item: Proposal]

Chad Lehman, Senior Wildlife Biologist, gave a presentation with information on data collection for bighorn sheep and other background information. The presentation included history of the Deadwood bighorn sheep herd. John Kanta, Terrestrial Section Chief, presented the proposal for the bighorn sheep hunting season. Proposed changes include to expand the unit boundary for BHS-BH4 to include those portions of Lawrence and Meade counties west of Interstate 90 and clean-up unit descriptions. Bighorn sheep license allocations were also presented. The commission is considering a total of seven licenses for the 2025 bighorn sheep season.

NO ACTION WAS TAKEN AS THERE WERE NO CHANGES TO THE PROPOSAL. FINALIZATION WILL TAKE PLACE IN APRIL 2025.

13. Prairie Elk Hunting Season [Action Item: Proposal]

Andrew Norton, Wildlife Program Administrator, presented a proposal for prairie elk season. A summary was provided reviewing the current Prairie Elk Season proposal that is scheduled to be finalized in April. In addition to the current proposal to expand the PRE-WRA unit and increase the season length and allow landowner-own-land hunting in PRE-27A, an amendment was approved to increase the season length and allow landowner-own-land hunting in PRE-9A.

MOTIONED BY LOCKEN, SECONDED BY WHITE TO ADOPT THE PROPOSAL FOR APRIL FINALIZATION. The motion carried unanimously.

14. Mountain Goat Action Plan [Action Item: Wildlife]

John Kanta, Terrestrial Section Chief, reviewed the mountain goat action plan. The action plan was presented at the January commission meeting and then made available for public review and comment. Comments received were related to the mountain goat hunting season that is currently closed. Comments did not cause the department to make any changes to the draft plan.

MOTIONED BY BIES, SECONDED BY THEEL TO ADOPT THE MOUNTAIN GOAT ACTION PLAN. The motion carried unanimously.

15. Swan Lake (Walworth Co.) Land Exchange [Action Item: Wildlife]

Habitat Program Manager, Ryan Wendinger presented information about the land exchange at Swan Lake. The land exchange details were shared for the second time regarding a 1/3 of an acre of GPA to be exchanged for 1/3 of an acre of private land to improve an access lane to main portion of Swan Lake. The GFP Commission adopted Resolution 25-03 approving and authorizing the department to move forward with the steps need to complete the exchange.

RESOLUTION 25-03

WHEREAS, the State of South Dakota (held by and for the use and benefit of the Department of Game, Fish, and Parks (GFP) owns an interest in real estate described as:

The 33 foot wide access lane as part of Lot 1 in the SW1/4NW1/4 of section 23, Township 121 North, Range 75 West of the 5th P.M., Walworth County, South Dakota; containing .30 acres, more or less, hereinafter referred to as GFP PROPERTY; and

WHEREAS, Jason Klocker (KLOCKER), of 6013 W. WHISTLER CT., SIOUX FALLS SD 57101, owns an interest in real estate described as:



Commission Meeting Minutes

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks

523 E Capitol Avenue | Pierre, South Dakota 57501

March 6-7, 2025 | Ramkota Convention Center | Pierre, SD

A 31 foot wide access lane across the north end of Lot 1, Thuente Addition located in the SW1/4NW1/4 in Section 23, Township 121 North, Range 75 West of the 5th P.M., Walworth County, South Dakota, containing .30 acres, more or less, hereinafter referred to as KLOCKER PROPERTY; and

WHEREAS, South Dakota law (SDCL 41-2-29.2) provides that GFP has the power, authority, and duty to trade or exchange real property owned by the State and held by GFP if the GFP Commission shall first determine that real property more suitable to GFP purposes may be obtained by an exchange, provided the parcels of real property to be exchanged are of equal value; and

WHEREAS, GFP and KLOCKER desire to exchange interests in GFP PROPERTY and KLOCKER PROPERTY, and the GFP Commission having determined that KLOCKER PROPERTY is more suitable to GFP for GFP purposes than GFP PROPERTY, and that GFP PROPERTY and KLOCKER PROPERTY are of equal value as determined by a qualified appraiser; and

WHEREAS, South Dakota law requires that the conveyance of GFP PROPERTY be approved and executed in the manner provided by SDCL 5-2-11.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the GFP Commission hereby takes final action on and approves the above referenced exchanges of the above described parcels of real property and hereby directs GFP to take all steps necessary to effectuate the exchange of GFP PROPERTY for KLOCKER PROPERTY under procedures mandated by statute.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the GFP Commission does hereby ratify and confirm the Department's designation of the KLOCKER PROPERTY being acquired pursuant to the exchange authorized by this Resolution for utilization by the Division of Wildlife for the purpose of game production and, further, does hereby expressly designate and classify the KLOCKER PROPERTY being acquired pursuant to the exchange authorized by this Resolution for use as a game production area.

MOTIONED BY BIES, SECONDED BY LOCKEN TO ADOPT RESOLUTION 25-03. The motion carried unanimously.

16. Faulk County Land Disposal

[Action Item: Wildlife]

Habitat Program Manager, Ryan Wendinger presented information about the Faulk County Land Disposal. The details to dispose of 19 groups of lots around Lake Faulkton were shared for the second time along with the appraised values of each lot. Information was shared that GFP would retain shoreline for fishing access. Information was also shared around a general timeline to dispose of the property. The GFP Commission adopted Resolution 25-04 approving and authorizing the department to proceed with disposing of this property per SDCL.

RESOLUTION 25 - 04

WHEREAS, the State of South Dakota (for the use and benefit of the Department of Game, Fish and Parks) (DEPARTMENT) owns the following described property in Faulk County South Dakota:

Lots 10, 11, 24, 25, 26, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 82, 83, 86, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 97, 98, 110, 111, 112, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, Outlot A, and Lot 1 of Outlot B located in the Southeast Quarter of Section 17, Township 118 North, Range 69 West of the 5th P.M., Faulk County, South Dakota.

WHEREAS, SDCL § 41-2-29.1 provides the DEPARTMENT shall sell real property owned by the state and held by the DEPARTMENT if such real property is no longer needed for game, fish, or parks purposes, with such sale to be conducted pursuant to the procedure more fully set out in SDCL § 41-2-29.1; and



Commission Meeting Minutes

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks

523 E Capitol Avenue | Pierre, South Dakota 57501

March 6-7, 2025 | Ramkota Convention Center | Pierre, SD

WHEREAS, these portions of the Lake Faulkton GPA were acquired by the DEPARTMENT to provide wildlife habitat and public hunting opportunity; and

WHEREAS, the DEPARTMENT has determined these portions of Lake Faulkton GPA provide limited value as wildlife habitat and for public hunting opportunity; and

WHEREAS, the Game, Fish and Parks Commission hereby determines these portions of the Lake Faulkton GPA no longer serve the purposes for which they were originally acquired and are no longer needed for game, fish, or park purposes.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Game, Fish and Parks Commission hereby directs the DEPARTMENT to sell and transfer title to these portions of Lake Faulkton GPA according to the procedures provided for in SDCL § 41-2-29.1, and authorizes the DEPARTMENT to execute and consummate agreements relative to the sales deemed appropriate by the Department, with proceeds from the sales dedicated to future GPA acquisitions.

MOTIONED BY WHITE, SECONDED BY LOCKEN TO ADOPT RESOLUTION 25-04. The motion carried unanimously.

17. Spink County Land Disposal

[Action Item: Wildlife]

Habitat Program Manager, Ryan Wendinger presented information regarding Spink County Land Disposal. The details to dispose of two parcels that were a previous site for structures to divert water to Twin Lakes. The structures have been removed and thus the department no longer has a need for these parcels of land. Appraised values were shared on the parcels. The GFP Commission adopted Resolution 25-05 approving and authorizing the department to proceed with disposing of this property per SDCL.

RESOLUTION 25 - 05

WHEREAS, the State of South Dakota (for the use and benefit of the Department of Game, Fish and Parks) (DEPARTMENT) owns the following described land in Spink County:

A strip of land Nine (9) rods wide in Northwest Quarter (NW1/4) of Section Twenty Four (24), Township One Hundred Fifteen (115), Range Sixty Five (65) West of the 5th P.M., the centerline of which is described as follows: Beginning at a point 1455.7' South and 274.5' East of the Northwest corner of the above mentioned Section Twenty Four (24), thence East for 670 feet, more or less, according to the survey thereof, containing 2.28 acres.

A strip of land Fourteen (14) rods wide in in Northwest Quarter (NW1/4) of Section Twenty Four (24), Township One Hundred Fifteen (115), Range Sixty Five (65) West of the 5th P.M., the centerline of which is described as follows: Beginning at a point 467.7' north of the center of Section Twenty Four (24), thence 200 feet, more or less, west containing 1.06 acres, more or less.

WHEREAS, SDCL § 41-2-29.1 provides the DEPARTMENT shall sell real property owned by the state and held by the DEPARTMENT if such real property is no longer needed for game, fish, or parks purposes, with such sale to be conducted pursuant to the procedure more fully set out in SDCL § 41-2-29.1; and

WHEREAS, these portions of the Twin Lakes Diversion Ditch GPA were acquired by the DEPARTMENT to provide wildlife habitat and public hunting opportunity; and

WHEREAS, the DEPARTMENT has determined these portions of Twin Lakes Diversion Ditch GPA provide limited value as wildlife habitat and for public hunting opportunity; and

WHEREAS, the Game, Fish and Parks Commission hereby determines these portions of the Twin Lakes Diversion Ditch GPA no longer serve the purposes for which they were originally acquired and are no longer needed for game, fish, or park purposes.



Commission Meeting Minutes

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks

523 E Capitol Avenue | Pierre, South Dakota 57501

March 6-7, 2025 | Ramkota Convention Center | Pierre, SD

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Game, Fish and Parks Commission hereby directs the DEPARTMENT to sell and transfer title to these portions of Twin Lakes Diversion Ditch GPA according to the procedures provided for in SDCL § 41-2-29.1, and authorizes the DEPARTMENT to execute and consummate agreements relative to the sales deemed appropriate by the Department, with proceeds from the sales dedicated to future GPA acquisitions.

MOTIONED BY BARTLING, SECONDED BY THEEL TO ADOPT RESOLUTION 25-05. The motion carried unanimously.

18. Lake Francis Case Fishery Update

[Info Item: Wildlife]

Jason Sorensen, Fisheries Biologist, presented an update on the Lake Francis Case Fishery. The Lake Francis Case (LFC) walleye relative abundance has been below average for the past 2 years. However, the portion of the population that is of harvestable size (>15 inches) has remained consistent. In 2024 58% of the sample was of harvestable size. Fall age-0 walleye electrofishing samples continue to show consistent reproduction in LFC. In 2024 LFC walleye had an excellent relative weight of 90 indicating very good condition which translates into very good growth. Walleye in LFC are reaching 16 inches in length by age 3. Angler use the past several years has been consistently around 140,000 angler hours. Walleye catch rates by anglers was low in 2024 (0.476 fish/hour). This was likely in large part due to over-wintering of age 0 gizzard shad during the mild winter of 2023/24 coupled with a large age-0 gizzard shad year class produced in 2024. These fish had plenty of forage available. Increased water clarity due to zebra mussels has also translocated walleye and allowed deeper light penetration leading to vegetation growth. Anglers targeting traditional areas with traditional methods are not finding success while those that have altered their location and/or methods have found success. Anglers harvested an estimated 67,543 walleye from LFC in 2024.

19. Southeast SD Fisheries Management

[Info Item: Wildlife]

Dave Lucchesi, South East Area Fisheries Supervisor, presented information on southeast South Dakota fisheries management. Marginal waters are shallow, highly-productive waterbodies that are prone to both summer and winterkill. Nearly half of the 96 waterbodies managed in southeastern South Dakota are designated as marginal and half of those have experienced at least one kill in the past four years. Fish kills, especially severe winterkill, can be beneficial by nearly eliminating over-abundant, non-game species like black bullhead and common carp providing a “clean slate” for fish stockings, however, winterkill has also wiped out some fisheries. Fish stocking is used to rebuild fish populations post-kill. Marginal lakes are stocked with pre-spawn northern pike, yellow perch and crappies as well as hatchery-reared walleye fry and small fingerlings. Impoundments and community fish ponds are restocked with panfish, bass, channel catfish and sometimes hatchery-reared saugeye. The prevalence of fish kills in marginal waters highlights the relevance of harvesting fish when they reach a keepable size because those fish are often lost to fish kills in the future.

20. Nest Predator Bounty Program

[Info Item: Wildlife]

Jacquie Ermer, Regional Wildlife Supervisor, provided information about the nest predator bounty program. The program opened on March 1 for youth under the age of 18 and will open April 1 for all ages of residents to participate. The schedule for collection days along with FAQs and Terms and Conditions can be found on the Game, Fish and Parks website. Participating youth will be entered into a weekly drawing to win a raccoon trapping starter kit. Youth can also receive a free copy of the National Trappers Association Trapping Handbook when they submit tails. The program will run through July 1 unless the maximum payout of \$500,000 is reached prior to July 1.



Commission Meeting Minutes

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks

523 E Capitol Avenue | Pierre, South Dakota 57501

March 6-7, 2025 | Ramkota Convention Center | Pierre, SD

21. Outdoor Campus East Expansion

[Info Item: Wildlife]

Kip Rounds, Regional Wildlife Supervisor, provided an update on the status of the Outdoor Campus Sioux Falls expansion project. This expansion project will be completed in 2 main phases. The first phase, which will involve the construction of an outdoor archery range, is nearing completion and will be opening to the public in March, pending weather. Phase 2 will involve an indoor archery range, expanded classroom space, cooking classroom, and remodel of existing space. This second phase will start around mid-March 2025 and completion is anticipated October 2026.

22. E-Tagging

[Info Item: Wildlife]

Chad Switzer, Wildlife Deputy Director, provided an e-tag update, which is a significant functionality available for use within Go Outdoors South Dakota. Since January 2024, an internal e-tagging workgroup has been meeting weekly and have held requirement meetings with Brandt Information Services. Internal testing of South Dakota's e-tag system is scheduled soon that will include a mock application, issuance of e-tags, e-notching for a successful harvest, reporting of harvest, and issuance of a confirmation number for transportation. Department staff will be presenting recommendations to our transportation rules to operate our current licensing system and an e-tag system concurrently as we phase in e-tagging into our limited draw seasons. Upon successful testing, implementation of an e-tag system would begin with the 2025 fall turkey hunting season.

23. License Sales Update

[Info Item: Wildlife]

Director Kirschenmann provided a short update on license sales for small game and fishing for the current license year, December 15 through February 28. Both categories are showing strong license sales with fishing licenses very strong due to good ice fishing conditions throughout the state. Currently, license sales revenue show about \$1 million ahead of last year. This can be attributed to strong sales and the license fee package passed last fall.

24. Custer State Park Private Cabin Transfer

[Action Item: Parks]

Matt Snyder, Parks Regional Supervisor, presented the Resolution for a Custer State Park Cabin Transfer. The Commission adopted Resolution NO. 25-02 which allows for the transfer of a private cabin within Custer State Park. The cabin is currently owned by the Richard K. Tobias Living Trust and is being transferred to his children who established the Archies Bunker LLC.

RESOLUTION NO. 25-02

WHEREAS, the Department of Game, Fish and Parks Commission has been advised that Richard K. Tobias Living Trust is the owner of a cabin located in Custer State Park (Custer County) on property described as:

No. 7 Pine Crest in the Northwest Quarter (NW ¼) of the Southwest Quarter (SW1/4) of Section (12), Township Four (4) South, Range Five (5) East, of the Black Hills Meridian, Custer County, South Dakota; and

WHEREAS, the property upon which the cabin is located is owned by the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks and has been leased to Richard K. Tobias Living Trust by permit by reason of a Stipulation of Settlement and Dismissal entered in Craft v. Wipf, Civil Action No. 85-5092, US District Court for the District of South Dakota, Western Division and subsequent agreements and PERMITS executed thereafter based on said Stipulation and Dismissal; and

WHEREAS, the Commission has been advised that Richard K. Tobias Living Trust desires to and has transferred and assigned all of his interest in said cabin and cabin site permit to Archies Bunker LLC, owned by the children of Richard K. Tobias; and

WHEREAS, the Commission has been requested to approve said Transfer and Assignment.



Commission Meeting Minutes

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks

523 E Capitol Avenue | Pierre, South Dakota 57501

March 6-7, 2025 | Ramkota Convention Center | Pierre, SD

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that in the event the Department receives an executed Agreement and Assignment of the cabin site permit and cabin and appurtenances located thereon and which further provides that said Assignee agrees to abide by all of the terms and conditions of the aforementioned Stipulation of Settlement and Dismissal and all subsequent agreements relative thereto, including but not limited to Cabin Site Permits, Addendums, and all agreements relative to establishing the lease or rental payments due the Department, then in that event the Department is authorized to execute a Consent to the requested Assignment.

MOTIONED BY THEEL, SECONDED BY BIES TO ADOPT RESOLUTION 25-02. The motion carried unanimously.

25. Spring Creek Restaurant Lease

[Action Item: Parks]

Sean Blanchette, State Parks Business Administrator, updated the Commission on the prospectus which was approved at the January meeting for the restaurant operation at Spring Creek Recreation Area. Blanchette informed the Commission that 2 responses were received, but they were not acceptable proposals. He provided a history of past operations and previous lease terms. New terms proposed for future operations include a base term of 3 years with renewal options for up to 5 years total, as well as restaurant equipment maintenance listed as a Concessionaire responsibility, and the implementation of lease payment to the state in the form of either a Franchise Fee of 4% of Gross Receipts or a direct reimbursement to the Department of utility costs. Blanchette also indicated that the convenience store, which is currently self-operated by Park staff, will be offered as an optional opportunity. Blanchette stated that the Department does not intend to issue future prospectuses if this effort does not yield acceptable proposals. Blanchette requested approval of a new prospectus to be advertised for a minimum of 30 days in accordance with the lease terms presented, with the intent to report the results back to the Commission at their May 2025 GFP meeting.

MOTIONED BY BIES, SECONDED BY THEEL TO APPROVE THE NEW PROSPECTUS TO BE ADVERTISED. The motion carried unanimously.

26. 2025 Marketing Plan and Theme Update

[Info Item: Parks]

April Larson, Marketing Coordinator, provided an update on the 2025 South Dakota State Parks Marketing Plan, which builds on the success of the See For Yourself 2024 campaign. The plan continues efforts to inspire more people to explore and enjoy state parks through strategic advertising and outreach. Advertising efforts will launch in March, utilizing targeted strategies to connect with the right audience at optimal times. By working with South Dakota-based marketing agency Lawrence & Schiller, the department will enhance outreach by strategically placing ads based on factors like weather conditions and campsite availability. The campaign aims to drive increased visitation across all areas, including camping, day use, lodging, and park programs. In addition to general marketing efforts, the Make a Splash annual theme will highlight water recreation in 2025, encouraging visitors to enjoy activities in, on, and around the water.

27. DOT Collector Road Projects Report

[Info Item: Parks]

Planning & Development Administrator, Adam Kulesa provided an update on the DOT Collector Road Program referencing the FY25 projects completed and the FY26 proposed projects. GFP staff will present an annual report and request for approval of the 2.8 million dollars for FY26 at the DOT Commission Meeting in late April.

28. Snake Creek Recreation Area Project Update

[Info Item: Parks]

Planning & Development Administrator, Adam Kulesa and Central Region Parks Supervisor, Pat Buscher shared a presentation on progress at Snake Creek Recreation Area. Mitigation efforts have been ongoing with the South Dakota Department of Transportation planning on replacing and relocating the Hwy 44



Commission Meeting Minutes

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks

523 E Capitol Avenue | Pierre, South Dakota 57501

March 6-7, 2025 | Ramkota Convention Center | Pierre, SD

bridge. A new park residence, shop complex, and dump/fish cleaning station are all complete. There will be minor disruptions in service over the next several years as the bridge project gets bid let and under contract. The park and park amenities will be open throughout the construction of the bridge and the department will continue to update the public on any temporary disruptions in service. The tentative completion date for the new bridge according to the SDDOT STIP plan is December 2028 with construction starting as early as the summer of 2025.

29. February Camping Units and Revenue Reports

[Info Item: Parks]

Jeff VanMeeteren, Director of Parks & Recreation, presented the February monthly and year-to-date report numbers for the Division of Parks & Recreation related to camping units and revenue. With the cool weather in February camping units were down but YTD exceed the 2024 numbers. The Parks Division revenue is up 1% YTD. Various graphs and charts were shared with the Commission to depict how park revenue comes in on a monthly basis throughout the year as well as the impact of the new non-resident park entrance license fees as compared to other entrance fees.

30. Adjourn

[Action Item]

A Regular Commission Meeting will be held on April 3-4, 2025, at the Matthews Training Center, in Pierre, starting at 1 pm CST.

MOTIONED BY BIES, SECONDED BY LOCKEN TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 9:50 AM CST ON March 7, 2025. Motion carried unanimously.

Submitted respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kevin Robling".

Kevin Robling, Department Secretary