



COMMISSION MINUTES

Game, Fish and Parks Commission

May 4-5, 2023

Events Barn | Custer State Park

CALL MEETING TO ORDER AT 1:00 PM MT

Chair Rissler called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm MT at the Event Barn located in Custer State Park on May 4, 2023. Commissioners Stephanie Rissler, Julie Bartling, Jim White, Robert Whitmyre, Travis Bies, Jon Locken, and Charles Spring were present. The public and staff can listen via SDPD Livestream, and participate via conference, or in person, with approximately 73 total participants attending via Zoom or in person.

DIVISION OF ADMINISTRATION

1. CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE

Chair Rissler called for a conflict of interest to be disclosed. *None were present.*

2. APPROVE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

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

Motioned Bies, seconded by Bartling to APPROVE THE APRIL 2023 REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES. The motion carried unanimously.

3. ADDITIONAL COMMISSIONER SALARY DAYS

Chair Rissler called for any additional salary day from the commissioners. *None were present.*

4. LICENSE HOLDER LIST REQUEST

Administrative Director, Chris Petersen, presented the Commission with a License Holder List Request from Second Century Habitat Fund of Sioux Falls, SD.

Motioned by Locken, seconded by Bies to APPROVE THE LICENSE HOLDER LIST REQUEST. The motion carried unanimously.

5. SOUTH DAKOTA GO OUTDOORS UPDATE

Keith Fisk, Licensing Program Administrator, gave a brief update on GoOutdoors South Dakota system. He highlighted a few of the upcoming draws and application periods.

6. SECOND CENTURY HABITAT FUND GALA

Brian Bashore, Executive Director of SCHF (South Century Habitat Fund), extended a warm invitation to the public to join the upcoming SCHF Gala, scheduled for June 3rd in Sioux Falls, SD. The purpose of the event is to raise funds for ongoing habitat improvement projects, conducted in collaboration with the department. By attending the gala, participants will actively contribute to the preservation and enhancement of natural habitats in South Dakota

7. NEW STAFF INTRODUCTION

Kevin Robling, Department Secretary, announced that Bruce Cull of Yankton, SD was appointed by Governor Noem on April 28, 2023, to take the final vacant seat on the Commission. His term will expire on January 24, 2024, as he will be finishing Russell Olson's term.

PUBLIC HEARING

Jon Kotilnek, Senior Staff Attorney, opened the floor at 2:06 pm CST for discussion from those in attendance on matters of importance to them pertaining to the finalizations to be considered by the Commission. The Public Hearing Minutes are immediately following these minutes.

Mr. Kotilnek closed the open forum at 2:25 pm CST.

OPEN FORUM

Jon Kotilnek, Senior Staff Attorney, opened the floor at 2:26 pm CST for discussion from those in attendance in matters of importance to them that may not be on the agenda.

- Catherine Nerud of Custer, SD provided testimony pertaining to Preserve French Creek.
- Jack Winter of Huron, SD provided testimony pertaining to Preserve French Creek.
- Neil Schanzenbach of Custer, SD provided testimony pertaining to Preserve French Creek.
- Robert Knox of Custer, SD provided testimony pertaining to Preserve French Creek.
- Tom Conger of Buffalo Gap, SD provided testimony pertaining to lease agreements and cattle grazing.
- Jerry Shagla of Hot Springs, SD provided testimony pertaining to lease agreements and cattle grazing.
- John Hopple of Black Hawk, SD representing the South Dakota Trappers Association provided testimony in opposition of the Beaver Trapping and Hunting petitions, and in support of the Furbearer Seasons proposal.
- David Goodwin of Piedmont, SD representing the Black Hills Mountain Lion Hunters provided testimony about the 2023 mountain lion hunting season.
- Jim Lintz of Custer, SD representing the Custer County Commissioners provided testimony about the Custer County fire costs.

Mr. Kotilnek closed the open forum at 2:59 pm CST.

Black Hills Fly Fishers and National Wild Turkey Federation awarded the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks department a \$40,000 check. As a result of a partnership effort between GFP, USFS Black Hills National Forest, Black Hills Fly Fishers, and the National Wild Turkey Federation, approximately 1.5 miles of Castle Creek below Deerfield Reservoir will be improved through a fencing project. The protection of this riparian area will benefit both the stream and trout population that thrives within it.

PETITIONS

8. PETITION #188: BLOWGUN FISHING IN SOUTH DAKOTA

Charles Ward of Rapid City, South Dakota, submitted Petition #188 requesting the legalization of blowgun fishing in South Dakota.

Department Position: The department recommended denying the petition.

Motioned by White, seconded by Bartling to DENY THE PETITION TO LEGALIZE BLOWGUN FISHING IN SOUTH DAKOTA. The motion carried unanimously.

Motioned by Bies, seconded by Bartling to ADOPT RESOLUTION 23-14 TO DENY THE PETITION LEAGALIZE BLOWGUN FISHING IN SOUTH DAKOTA. The motion carried unanimously.

9. PETITION #189: BEAVER HUNTING & TRAPPING

Nancy Hilding of Black Hawk, South Dakota, representing the Prairie Hills Audubon Society submitted Petition #189 requesting the removal of beaver trapping and hunting from January 1, 2024, to January 1, 2027, on Black Hills National Forest lands.

Department Position: The department recommended denying the petition.

Motioned by Bartling, seconded by Spring to DENY THE PETITION TO REMOVE BEAVER TRAPPING AND HUNTING FROM JANUARY 1, 2024, TO JANUARY 1, 2027, ON BLACK HILLS NATIONAL FOREST LANDS. The motion carried unanimously.

Motioned by Whitmyre, seconded by Locken to ADOPT RESOLUTION 23-15 TO DENY PETITION TO REMOVE BEAVER TRAPPING AND HUNTING FROM JANUARY 1, 2024, TO JANUARY 1, 2027, ON BLACK HILLS NATIONAL FOREST LANDS. The motion carried unanimously.

10. PETITION #190: BEAVER HUNTING & TRAPPING

Nancy Hilding of Black Hawk, South Dakota, representing the Prairie Hills Audubon Society submitted Petition #190 requesting the removal of beaver trapping and hunting from January 1, 2024, to January 1, 2027, on Black Hills National Forest lands, and provide a method to impose a moratorium on other lands owned by the public.

Department Position: The department recommended denying the petition.

Motioned by Bartling, seconded by Spring to DENY THE PETITION TO REMOVE BEAVER TRAPPING AND HUNTING FROM JANUARY 1, 2024, TO JANUARY 1, 2027, ON BLACK HILLS NATIONAL FOREST LANDS WITH THE ABILITY TO IMPOSE A MORATORIUM. The motion carried unanimously.

Motioned by Whitmyre, seconded by Locken to ADOPT RESOLUTION 23-16 TO DENY PETITION TO REMOVE BEAVER TRAPPING AND HUNTING FROM JANUARY 1, 2024, TO JANUARY 1, 2027, ON BLACK HILLS NATIONAL FOREST LANDS WITH THE ABILITY TO IMPOSE A MORATORIUM. The motion carried unanimously.

PROPOSALS

11. FURBEARER SEASONS

Keith Fisk, Licensing Program Administrator, presented the commission with the Furbearer Season proposals. The department had no recommended changes to the following seasons:

- Beaver Trapping and Hunting Season (Chapter 41:08:01),
- Skunk, Opossum, Jackrabbit, Fox, Raccoon, and Badger Season (Chapter 41:08:01),
- Mink, Weasel, and Muskrat Hunting and Trapping Season (Chapter 41:08:01),
- Muskrat Hunting Season (Chapter 41:08:01).

Since the department had no recommended changes, THE COMMISSION TOOK NO ACTION ON THE PROPOSALS.

FINALIZATIONS

12. WATERFOWL HUNTING SEASON

WATERFOWL HUNTING SEASONS – CHAPTER 41:06:16

Department recommendations: No changes were recommended from the proposal.

Motioned by Bies, seconded by Locken to APPROVE THE FINALIZATION. The motion carried unanimously.

13. DEER HUNTING SEASONS

WEST RIVER PRAIRIE DEER HUNTING SEASONS – CHAPTER 41:06:20

Department recommendations: No changes were recommended from the proposal.

Motioned by Bies, seconded by Bartling to APPROVE THE FINALIZATION. The motion carried unanimously.

APPRENTICE HUNTER DEER SEASONS – CHAPTER 41:06:44

Department recommendations: No changes were recommended from the proposal.

Motioned by Bartling, seconded by Spring to APPROVE THE FINALIZATION. The motion carried unanimously.

YOUTH DEER HUNTING SEASON – CHAPTER 41:06:63

Department recommendations: No changes were recommended from the proposal.

Motioned by Whitmyre, seconded by Locken to APPROVE THE FINALIZATION. The motion carried unanimously.

CUSTER STATE PARK DEER HUNTING SEASON – CHAPTER 41:06:41

Department recommendations: Include an additional sentence in 41:06:41:01 to specify any deer and any whitetail licenses are valid through November 1 through November 30 and antlerless whitetail licenses valid from December 1 through December 15.

Motioned by White, seconded by Locken to APPROVE THE AMENDMENT TO THE PROPOSAL. The motion carried unanimously.

Motioned by Locken, seconded by Bartling to APPROVE THE FINALIZATION AS AMENDED. The motion carried unanimously.

NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE DEER HUNTING SEASON – CHAPTER 41:06:36

Department recommendations: No changes were recommended from the proposal.

Motioned by Whitmyre, seconded by Bartling to APPROVE THE FINALIZATION. The motion carried unanimously.

14. DEER HUNTING SEASONS LICENSE ALLOCATIONS

Andrew Norton, Wildlife Program Administrator, presented the Commission with the proposed Deer Hunting Season License Allocations.

Motioned by Bartling, seconded by Locken to APPROVE DEER HUNTING SEASONS LICENSE ALLOCATIONS FINALIZATION. The motion carried unanimously.

DIVISION OF PARKS & RECREATION

15. LAKE OAHE UPDATE

During the presentation, Pat Buscher, Regional Supervisor, provided an update on the Lake Oahe Reservoir and its associated amenities. The Corps of Engineers' May forecast predicts a gradual increase in water levels throughout May and June, reaching an expected peak elevation of 1603.4. This bodes well for optimal water levels during the 4th of July and Labor Day weekends. Furthermore, out of the 21

department managed areas, boat ramps on Lake Oahe will be operational on 19 of them this summer. Additionally, the Spring Creek marina will be fully operational, with all 65 slips rented out for the season.

16. FORT SISSETON SMITHSONIAN EXHIBIT & FESTIVAL UPDATE

Alicia Tonsfeldt, Park Manager, informed the Commissioners about two upcoming events at Fort Sisseton. The much-anticipated Smithsonian exhibit, "Crossroads – Change in Rural America," will be on display from May 6 to June 25, 2023. Additionally, the Fort Sisseton Historical Festival is scheduled for June 2-4.

17. CUSTER STATE PARK: SYLVAN LAKE LODGE AND STORE CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

The Commission received a comprehensive update from Matt Snyder, Regional Supervisor, on the ongoing Sylvan Lake building projects. The presentation covered various aspects, including the progress of the repairs on Sylvan Lake Lodge following the 2021 fire incident. Additionally, updates were provided on the construction of the new Sylvan Lake Store and wedding venue, which are scheduled to be open to the public in May 2023.

18. CUSTER STATE PARK: RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Brandon Prehn, Service Forester, shared a concise update on CSP's winter activities. This included completing approximately 320 acres of pre-commercial thinning in uneven-aged stands, along with 130 acres of pre-commercial thinning in even-aged stands. Meadow restoration mastication work covering 40/68 acres is currently under contract. A successful 100-acre prescribed fire was conducted in April 2023. Additionally, CSP created 10 acres of fuel breaks through pre-commercial thinning and slash piling, and initiated a 20-acre pre-commercial thinning project near the Badger Clark Historic Trail to enhance the area's health and productivity.

Bailey Eitel, Range Ecologist, also updated the commissioners that Custer State Park is collaborating with SDSU on an intriguing research project. The study involves tracking bison grazing patterns using GPS collars, enabling them to discern the specific areas of the park the bison utilize, particularly within the legion lake scar. Furthermore, the research aims to analyze the family structures within the bison herd. This research initiative holds promise for enhancing our understanding of bison behavior and their ecological impact within the park.

19. SPRING OPERATIONS IN PARKS, UPCOMING EVENTS, AND PARK RESERVATIONS

Jeff VanMeeteren, Parks & Recreation Director, delivered a comprehensive summary to the Commission, highlighting the extensive operational efforts undertaken by the park staff during the spring season to ensure the functionality of GF&P parks for recreational users. In addition to providing an overview of upcoming park events scheduled within the next 45 days, an update was given on the status of park reservations. It was noted that April witnessed a promising increase in park visitation by 7% and a corresponding revenue growth of 5% for the month. This positive trend reflects the successful management and appeal of the parks to the public.

DIVISION OF WILDLIFE

20. GROUSE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Alex Solem, Senior Upland Game Biologist, addressed the Commission, sharing valuable insights regarding the public comment period for the Prairie Grouse Action Plan.

Whitmyre moved to APPROVE THE AMENDMENT TO THE PRAIRIE GROUSE MANAGEMENT PLAN, 2023-2027, with Bartling seconding the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Bies moved to ADOPT THE PRAIRIE GROUSE ACTION PLAN, 2023-2027 WITH THE AMENDMENT, with White seconding the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

21. LAND ACQUISITIONS

Ryan Wendinger, Habitat Program Administrator, provided a comprehensive update on recent land acquisitions during the meeting. He shared details about the Davis property located in Day County, specifically on Bitter Lake. The property spans 320 acres and has been appraised at a value of \$24,000. The agreed purchase price was also confirmed at \$24,000. Currently, a 30-day public comment period is open, and the commission will make a decision regarding the property at the June meeting.

Additionally, Ryan Wendinger informed the attendees about a land purchase made by Pheasants Forever in Stanley County. Pheasants Forever acquired 560 acres, which will be generously donated to GFP as part of their Build a Wildlife Area program. The acquisition of this property was made possible through financial donations from various groups and individuals who contributed to the fundraising effort. Similar to the Davis property, the commission will take action on this land during the June meeting after a 30-day public comment period.

Ryan Wendinger's report highlighted the progress made in expanding land holdings, both through direct acquisition and partnerships, demonstrating the commitment to enhancing wildlife habitats and providing public access opportunities.

22. USE OF PRESCRIBED BURNS ON PUBLIC LANDS

During his presentation to the Commission, Ryan Wendinger, Habitat Program Administrator, discussed the topic of prescribed fire on public lands. He outlined the five main objectives of using prescribed fire in land management, emphasizing the importance of interagency collaboration and partnership with SD Wildland Fire. Wendinger provided an overview of the previous acres burned on public land and shared plans for acreage to be burned in 2023. He also provided details about the upcoming Little Bend fire.

23. RAPID CREEK HABITAT UPDATE

Grant Truskowski, Aquatic Habitat and Access Biologist, delivered a comprehensive update on Phase 2 of the habitat enhancement project in the Pactola Basin of Rapid Creek during the commission meeting. He shared key insights regarding the project's current timeline, highlighting the progress made thus far. Truskowski provided detailed information about the in-stream features implemented as part of the enhancement efforts. Additionally, he discussed relevant research conducted in relation to the project and highlighted the valuable partnerships and funding sources involved.

24. RIPARIAN HABITAT UPDATE

Ryan Wendinger, Habitat Program Administrator, shared details about winter meetings held by the staff to discuss existing private lands habitat programs and explore avenues for their expansion to align with landowners' goals and objectives. Additionally, Wendinger highlighted the development of a pilot Riparian Habitat Program aimed at improving riparian areas. He emphasized the ongoing collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), landowners, and other stakeholders in these efforts. The presentation showcased the commitment to enhancing habitat programs and fostering partnerships to make positive changes to riparian areas.

25. FISH WINTER SURVIVAL UPDATE

Dave Lucchesi, Area Fisheries Supervisor, shared information on the extent of winterkill of fish in lakes across southeastern South Dakota. Southeast Aquatics staff conducted a visual inspection of nearly all lakes in the region and test nets were set where appreciable numbers of dead fish were observed.

Shallow lakes along the I-90 corridor were hit hardest with most experiencing a severe fish kill. Shallow lakes across Minnehaha County (Clear, Covell, Diamond, Family Park, and S Island) also experienced severe fish kills. Lots of dead fish were found along the shoreline of Swan Lake (Turner Co), Long Lake (Lake Co), Lake Campbell (Moody Co) Interstate Lake (Brookings Co), East Oakwood Lake (Brookings Co), Lake Albert (Kingsbury County) and Cavour Lake (Beadle Co). Test nets did catch game fish (northern pike, yellow perch, walleye, etc.) in all but the hardest hit shallow lakes (I-90 corridor, Minnehaha Co, Swan, Long and Cavour). Most winterkill lakes have already been stocked with hatchery-reared walleye and saugeye fry this spring. Many private pond owners have also reported winterkill in their ponds and are currently applying for permits to restock.

26. WALLEYE SPAWNING EFFORTS

Jake Davis, Fisheries Program Manager, provided an update on the walleye spawning efforts that the GFP has put forth this year.

27. AVIAN INFLUENZA UPDATE

Rocco Murano, Senior Waterfowl Biologist, delivered an update to the commission regarding the current outbreak of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI). He highlighted that the outbreak, which commenced in the late winter of 2022, has had an impact on the poultry industry, resulting in the loss or euthanization of 59 million birds. What sets this outbreak apart from previous ones is the significant mortality observed in wild birds, with approximately 26,000 documented deaths and many more suspected cases. To address the situation, SDGFP is actively collaborating with partners to aid poultry producers, document bird mortalities, and conduct operational monitoring programs to assess potential population-level impacts. This update underscored the collaborative efforts aimed at mitigating the effects of HPAI on both the poultry industry and wild bird populations.

28. LICENSE SALES UPDATE

During the meeting, Wildlife Director, Tom Kirschenmann, delivered a comprehensive summary of license sales from December 15 to April 30. Notably, there has been an increase in license sales in the past month, which can be attributed to improved weather conditions. Specifically, resident sales for fishing have shown an upward trend, while nonresident sales have slightly lagged compared to the previous year during the same period. Director Kirschenmann expressed optimism regarding the improving weather conditions and the promising number of bird observations reported over the past 2-3 weeks.

ADJOURN

Motioned by Bies, seconded by Bartling to ADJOURN THE MEETING. The motion carried unanimously.

Meeting ADJOURNED ON MAY 5, 2023, AT 11:23 AM MT.

Respectfully submitted,



Kevin Robling, Department Secretary