



Commission Meeting Minutes

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks

523 E Capitol Avenue | Pierre, South Dakota 57501

May 8-9, 2025 | Custer State Park Event Barn | Custer, SD

REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING

Call Meeting to Order

Chair Rissler called the meeting to order at 1 pm MT at the Custer State Park Event Barn, in Custer, SD on May 8, 2025. Commissioners Stephanie Rissler, Bruce Cull, Jon Locken, Travis Theel, Jim White, and Julie Bartling were in attendance. With six commission members present, a quorum was established. The public and staff could listen via SDPB Livestream and participate via conference or in person, with approximately 91 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 April 2025 meeting. Minutes are available at <https://gfp.sd.gov/commission/archives/>.

MOTIONED BY CULL, SECONDED BY BARTLING TO APPROVE THE APRIL 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 Cull for one day.

MOTIONED BY BARTLING, SECONDED BY WHITE 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:

1. Jaden Jenkins, Assistant Park Manager, Richmond Lake
2. Shad Stromer, Park Manager, Spring and Cow Creek Recreation Area

Tom Kirschenmann, Director of Wildlife, introduced four new employees:

1. Jennifer Evans, Senior Secretary, Ft. Pierre Licensing Office Ft Pierre
2. Michael Peyton, Private Lands Habitat Biologist, Outdoor Campus West
3. Alec Baker, Resource Biologist, Outdoor Campus West
4. Cody Neumann, GIS Program Specialist, Outdoor Campus West

Public Hearing

Senior Staff Attorney Nick Michels opened the floor at 2:05 pm MT for discussion from those in attendance in matters of importance to them that are listed on the agenda as finalization. After hearing comments on finalization items the Public Hearing was closed at 2:12 pm MT.

Agenda Item #8: E-Tagging

No Testimony Provided

Agenda #9: Mentored Hunter

No Testimony Provided



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Agenda #10: Deer Hunting Seasons

2:07 pm: Ernest Getty of Rapid City, SD testified in person requesting the ability to apply for all deer license types at one time, concern of deer depredation especially in East Rapid Valley, requested a reduction in various park and hunting fees for veterans, and thanked John Kanta for his work on the shooting complex and Brian Meyers for his years of service.

Agenda #11: Black Hills and Custer State Park Elk Hunting Seasons

2:10 pm: Ron Kolbeck of Salem, SD representing South Dakota Bowhunters Association testified in person in opposition of antlerless elk license increase in the Black Hills and Custer State Park.

Senior Staff Attorney Michels closed the public hearing closed at 2:12 pm MT.

Before the Open Forum began, Josh Schmaltz, from Regency Hotel Management, welcomed and thanked commissioners and Game, Fish and Parks staff for the opportunity to host staff and provide Game, Fish and Parks with concession services. He gave updates on projects including the Mickelson Chapel and renovations of the six lodging rooms in the State Game Lodge.

Open Forum

Senior Staff Attorney Nick Michels opened the floor at 2:17 pm MT 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.

2:18 pm: Nancy Hilding of Black Hawk, SD representing Prairie Hills Audubon Society testified virtually in opposition of beaver trapping and the river otter proposal.

2:23 pm: Julie Anderson of Rapid City, SD representing Signs of Hope testified virtually in support of the beaver hunting and trapping season petitions.

2:24 pm: Cliff Stone of Chamberlain, SD testified virtually in opposition of eliminating the closed area on Lake Francis Case.

2:28 pm: Todd Craig of Rapid City, SD testified virtually in opposition of deer tag allocation recommendations in southeast South Dakota.

2:29 pm: Bill Young of Rapid City, SD testified in person in support of the beaver hunting and trapping moratorium for atleast three years. He is the Habitat Chair for Pheasants Forever and at Pheasant Fest they received an award for habitat in South Dakota. He spoke in support of beaver habitat and the Prairie Audobon Society's work on beaver habitat.

2:33 pm: Jim Ashmore and John Stahl of Custer, SD spoke in person to offer their thanks for the support from Game, Fish and Parks of the West Dam Project in Custer, SD. They explained the project and the history of the dam.

2:38 pm: Ron Kolbeck of Salem, SD representing South Dakota Bowhunters Association testified in person in opposition of deer license allocation and discussed recommendations the association came up with regarding deer population and licensing issues.

2:42 pm: Mike Jarding of Hot Springs, SD testified in person in requesting reduction of licenses for mule deer in Unit 27 A and B and Unit 21 A and B. He also voiced support in hunting mountain lions with hounds to help with deer population increase for that area.



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2:44 pm: Eric Sharpe representing the Mule Deer Foundation testified in person to propose for two statewide Any Deer tags in support of South Dakota conservation projects.

2:48 pm: Jeff Anderson of Rapid City, SD testified in person in support of beaver hunting and trapping moratorium in the Black Hills Fire Protection District for three years. He also spoke on limiting west river beaver trapping to five months.

Senior Staff Attorney Michels closed the open forum at 2:49 pm MT.

5. #239 Purple Heart Recipient Rule

[Action Item: Petition]

Al Nedved, Deputy Director of Parks and Recreation introduced Connie Stone, who is the Veterans Affairs Coordinator for South Dakota State University. Ms. Stone submitted a petition to include recipients of the Purple Heart to be included as eligible applicants for the resident lifetime disable veterans park entrance license, and discounted camping fees for campsites, electricity, and camping cabins. This benefit is currently allowable for South Dakota residents who are 100% disabled veterans and prisoners of war. The intent of the petition was to illustrate the similarities between the total disability, prison of war, and Purple Heart designations and the overlap and confusion about their eligibility. The Department recommended that this petition could help clarify eligibility, respect and honor Purple Heart recipients, and would have no fiscal impact due to the low number of Purple Heart recipients in South Dakota.

MOTIONED BY CULL, SECONDED BY BARTLING TO ACCEPT THE PETITION AND MOVE TO JUNE FINALIZATION. The motion carried unanimously.

6. #240 Beaver Hunting and Trapping Season

[Action Item: Petition]

Director Kirschenmann introduced a petition submitted by Nancy Hilding to the commission. This petition asked the commission to close the take of beaver in the Black Hills Fire Protection District. Ms. Hilding's petition also asked the commission to change the statewide beaver season to 5 months instead of year-round. Kirschenmann shared the Department's recommendation to deny the petition for the following reasons: 1) the department had already recommended a proposal to the commission to close the beaver season in the Black Hills Fire Protection District which the commission accepted, 2) each year the department receives numerous Request for Service from landowners across the state dealing with beaver damage or destruction of property and thus desire to retain a year-round season; and 3) a year-round season outside the Black Hills allows landowners address or allow others to address issues.

MOTIONED BY WHITE, SECONDED BY LOCKEN TO DENY PETITION #240. Motion carried unanimously.

MOTIONED BY CULL, SECONDED BY BARTLING TO ADOPT RESOLUTION 25-07 DENYING PETITION #240.

RESOLUTION 25-07

WHEREAS, Nancy Hilding of Black Hawk, South Dakota, submitted a Petition to the Game, Fish and Parks Commission (Commission) dated May 2, 2025, requesting that the Game, Fish and Parks Commission amend the beaver trapping and hunting season rule; 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



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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 amend the beaver trapping and hunting season dates and unit description; and

WHEREAS, the Department has recommended a proposal to the Commission to close the beaver trapping and hunting season in the Black Hills Fire Protection; and

WHEREAS, trends in the rate of beaver trapped or harvested over the past 10 years do not suggest a decline in beaver abundance; and

WHEREAS, the majority of South Dakota is privately owned land and maintaining a year-round season allows landowners to address beaver damage through recreational trapping; and

WHEREAS, the department spends considerable time and resources addressing beaver requests for service; and

WHEREAS, trapping rates are influenced by access to private land, beaver availability, and beaver fur prices more than season length.

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 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

7. #241 Beaver Hunting and Trapping Season

[Action Item: Petition]

Director Kirschenmann introduced a second petition submitted by Christine Sandvik to the commission. This petition asked the commission to close the take of beaver in the Black Hills Fire Protection District. Ms. Sandvik’s petition also asked the commission to convert the beaver season in the western part of the state to change from year-round to 5 months, however leaving it year-round in eastern SD. Kirschenmann shared the Department’s recommendation to deny the petition for the following reasons: 1) the department had already recommended a proposal to the commission to close the beaver season in the Black Hills Fire Protection District which the commission accepted, 2) each year the department receives numerous Request for Service from landowners across the state dealing with beaver damage or destruction of property and thus desire to retain a year-round season; and 3) a year-round season outside the Black Hills allows landowners address or allow others to address issues.

MOTIONED BY BARTLING, SECONDED BY WHITE TO DENY PETITION #241. Motion carried unanimously.



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MOTIONED BY WHITE, SECONDED BY THEEL TO ADOPT RESOLUTION 25-08 DENYING PETITION #241.

RESOLUTION 25-08

WHEREAS, Christine Sandvik of Rapid City, South Dakota, submitted a Petition to the Game, Fish and Parks Commission (Commission) dated May 2, 2025, requesting that the Game, Fish and Parks Commission amend the beaver trapping and hunting season rule; 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 amend the beaver trapping and hunting season dates and unit description; and

WHEREAS, the Department has recommended a proposal to the Commission to close the beaver trapping and hunting season in the Black Hills Fire Protection; and

WHEREAS, trends in the rate of beaver trapped or harvested over the past 10 years do not suggest a decline in beaver abundance; and

WHEREAS, the majority of South Dakota is privately owned land and maintaining a year-round season allows landowners to address beaver damage through recreational trapping; and

WHEREAS, the department spends considerable time and resources addressing beaver requests for service; and

WHEREAS, trapping rates are influenced by access to private land, beaver availability, and beaver fur prices more than season length.

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 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, Christine Sandvik of Rapid City, South Dakota.



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8. E-Tagging

[Action Item: Finalization]

Chad Switzer, Wildlife Deputy Director, reviewed the proposal for changes to the tagging and transportation rules for the implementation of an e-tag system. With these changes and upon successful comprehensive testing of the e-tag system, the current locking seal tagging requirement and allow for e-tagging will be a legal method and operate concurrently until e-tagging is implemented for all hunting seasons (big game and tundra swan) that require tagging.

MOTIONED BY CULL, SECONDED BY THEEL TO ADOPT CHANGES TO E-TAGGING FINALIZATION. The motion carried unanimously.

MOTIONED BY BARTLING, SECONDED BY WHITE TO APPROVE THE E-TAGGING FINALIZATION. The motion carried unanimously.

9. Mentored Hunter

[Action Item: Finalization]

Chad Switzer, Wildlife Deputy Director, reviewed the proposal that addresses Senate Bill 41 from the 2025 Legislative Session. The proposed changes will streamline the mentored hunting program by the following: 1) the mentored hunter, or mentee, would be issued their respective license and be the holder of their license (previously, the license was issued to the mentor); 2) there would be no group size restriction for mentoring hunting; 3) consent for mentored hunting would now be verbal or written (previously, written consent was required); and 4) the proposed change would allow the GFP Commission to establish criteria and conditions for other mentored hunting season.

MOTIONED BY LOCKEN, SECONDED BY THEEL TO APPROVE THE MENTORED HUNTER FINALIZATION. The motion carried unanimously.

10. Deer Hunting Seasons

[Action Item: Finalization]

The commission took action to finalize the Apprentice, Archery, Muzzleloading, and Black Hills Deer Seasons. Most changes were administrative rule clean-ups and substantive changes were to expand the municipal hunting unit to extend beyond the city limits of Sioux Falls and to create a municipal hunting unit for the city of Hot Springs, although no licenses were allocated specifically to archery hunt in Hot Springs.

MOTIONED BY BARTLING, SECONDED BY CULL TO APPROVE THE APPRENTICE HUNTER DEER SEASON FINALIZATION. Motion carried unanimously.

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

MOTIONED BY WHITE, SECONDED BY LOCKEN TO APPROVE THE GENERAL MUZZLELOADER SEASON FINALIZATION. Motion carried unanimously.

MOTIONED BY THEEL, SECONDED BY BARTLING TO APPROVE THE BLACK HILLS DEER SEASON FINALIZATION. Motion carried unanimously.

11. Black Hills and Custer State Park Elk Hunting Seasons

[Action Item: Finalization]

Andrew Norton, Wildlife Program Administrator, reviewed information regarding Black Hills and Custer State Park Elk hunting seasons. No changes were made to the elk seasons in administrative rule.

NO ACTION WAS TAKEN ON THE FINALIZATION FOR BLACK HILLS AND CUSTER STATE PARK ELK HUNTING SEASONS DUE TO NO CHANGE IN THE SEASONS.



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12. Furbearer Trapping

[Action Item: Proposal]

John Kanta, Terrestrial Section Chief presented changes including to modify the unit description for the Black Hills beaver and muskrat seasons to match the Black Hills Fire Protection District, as defined in SDCL. Changes included closing the beaver trapping and hunting season in the Black Hills Fire Protection District.

MOTIONED BY THEEL, SECONDED BY WHITE TO ADOPT THE BEAVER HUNTING AND TRAPPING PROPOSAL FOR JUNE FINALIZATION. The motion carried unanimously.

NO ACTION WAS TAKEN ON THE SKUNK, OPOSSUM, FOX, RACCOON AND BADGER SEASON PROPOSAL. THE FINALIZED VERSION WILL BE BROUGHT BEFORE COMMISSION IN JUNE 2025.

MOTIONED BY LOCKEN, SECONDED BY CULL TO ADOPT THE MINK, WEASEL AND MUSKRAT HUNTING AND TRAPPING SEASON PROPOSAL FOR JUNE FINALIZATION. The motion carried unanimously.

13. River Otter Proposal and Status Update

[Action Item: Proposal]

John Kanta, Terrestrial Section Chief presented changes including to increase the harvest limit for the river otter season from twenty to thirty river otters.

Alex Solem, Senior Wildlife Biologist, presented information on how river otter populations are monitored in eastern South Dakota. River otter populations need multiple methods for monitoring due to their secretive nature. In South Dakota, GFP used verified reports, information collected from necropsies, harvest surveys, and latrine surveys to guide management decisions. Recent monitoring efforts have indicated river otter populations are doing well and expanding into suitable habitat.

MOTIONED BY THEEL, SECONDED BY LOCKEN TO APPROVE THE RIVER OTTER PROPOSAL. THE FINALIZATION WILL BE BROUGHT BEFORE THE COMMISSION IN JUNE 2025. The motion carried unanimously.

14. Eliminate Closed Area on Lake Francis Case

[Action Item: Proposal]

Jake Davis, Fisheries Program Administrator, reviewed a commission proposal that would allow for year-round angling in the area commonly known as the "dredge-hole" on Lake Francis Case. This was originally brought as a petition at the April Commission Meeting and was accepted by the Commission. No recommended changes were made to the proposal.

NO ACTION WAS TAKEN ON THE PROPOSAL ELIMINATING THE CLOSED AREA ON LAKE FRANCIS CASE. THE FINALIZED VERSION WILL BE BROUGHT BEFORE COMMISSION IN JUNE 2025.

15. Spring Creek Recreation Area Restaurant Prospectus Update

[Action Item: Parks]

Jeff VanMeeteren, Director of Parks & Recreation and Al Nedved, Deputy Director of Parks & Recreation presented to the Commission the status of the prospectus advertisement for a concession agreement for restaurant services at Spring Creek Recreation Area. The most recent prospectus expired on April 15, 2025 and no proposals were received. GFP requested the issuance of a new RFP with the same 5-year option that requires a 4% franchise fee or direct reimbursement of GFP for utility expenses. The RFP will include a negotiable start date, but not later than May 1, 2026. The RFP will advertise for a minimum of 30 days, or up to 60 days if no valid proposal is received prior to the 30-day period. If no proposal is received from this advertisement, GFP will request readvertisement again this fall.

MOTIONED BY CULL, SECONDED BY LOCKEN TO APPROVE THE ISSUANCE OF A NEW SPRING CREEK RESTAURANT RFP. The motion carried unanimously.



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16. CSP Concession Lease

[Info Item: Parks]

Al Nedved, Deputy Director of Parks & Recreation and Jeff VanMeeteren, Director of Parks & Recreation provided an update on the status of the Custer State Park Concession. This lease was entered into February 1, 2007, and was extended twice in response to investments in facilities and infrastructure for a total of 20 years. The amended lease is set to expire on January 31, 2027. Under the lease with Regency CSP Ventures, many extensive improvements have been made to facilities, services, and infrastructure. Revenue, franchise fees, and repair programs have expanded greatly. Two options exist under administrative rule 41:13. One is to go through a competitive bidding process or the Commission has the option to extend the concession contract within 18 month of expiration. The Department will explore the lease extension option with the current concessionaire until the window to do so closes on July 31, 2025. The Department will consider potential investments, services, or related terms that will support a lease extension, and if a favorable agreement can be reached, the Department will provide it to the Commission no later than the July meeting.

17. Bridge City Concession Lease

[Info Item: Parks]

Jeff VanMeeteren, Director of Parks & Recreation and Al Nedved, Deputy Director of Parks & Recreation provided an update on the status of the Bridge City Concession lease located within Indian Creek Recreation Area. This lease was entered into January 3, 2012, and was extended five years in response to investments in facilities for a total of 15 years. The amended lease is set to expire on December 31, 2026. Bridge City Marina has done an excellent job serving the park and the local community. Two options exist under administrative rule 41:13. One is to go through a competitive bidding process or the Commission has the option to extend the concession contract within 18 month of expiration. The Department will explore the lease extension option with the current concessionaire until the window to do so closes on June 30, 2025. The Department will consider potential investments, services, or related terms that will support a lease extension, and if a favorable agreement can be reached, the Department will provide it to the Commission no later than the June meeting.

18. CSP Bison Research

[Info Item: Parks]

Jason Gooder, Division Staff Specialist, presented information on CSP Bison Research. Currently the park is working with South Dakota State University Center of Excellence to understand range utilization of bison within CSP. The study will help determine seasonal movements and home range of bison. This will allow staff to better determine the impacts bison may have across the range land in the park and help develop future strategies of range management including the use of prescribed fire and setting carry capacity objectives. The current method had deployed 25 lab made collars on cows that are 6 years and older. The study will also determine the overall functionality of the collars.

18. CSP Interpretive Programming

[Info Item: Parks]

Aaron Douglas, Program Specialist gave a presentation that focused on Interpretive Programs in Custer State Park and focused on the variety of programs offered by park staff ranging from skills-based programs to interpretive programs. The park provides up to twelve programs per day during the summer season. Staff continuously evaluates these programs to ensure they attract guests and maintain high quality. Additionally, a variety of programs are offered during the off-season.

19. April Park Camping Unit and Revenue Report

[Info Item: Parks]

Jeff VanMeeteren, Director of Parks & Recreation, presented the April monthly and year-to-date report numbers for the Division of Parks & Recreation related to camping units and revenue. In spite of the cooler weather in April camping units were up 6% for the month and 2% YTD which is on pace with the Divisions annual goal for 2025. The Parks Division revenue is up 11% YTD with entrance license sales remaining strong and camping revenue starting to pick up. Various graphs and charts were shared with the



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Commission to depict how park revenue has come in for the Division overall and the impact of the new non-resident park entrance license fees as compared to other entrance fees.

20. Deer Hunting Licenses Administrative Action

[Action Item: Wildlife]

The commission also took administrative action to finalize unit specific license types and allocations for: Archery, Muzzleloading, Black Hills, Custer State Park, Refuge, West River, and East River Deer seasons. License allocations and open areas to hunt for all but Custer State Park were reduced and they focused on decreasing female deer harvest to increase population across much of the state.

MOTIONED BY CULL, SECONDED BY LOCKEN TO ADOPT THE LICENSE TYPES AND ALLOCATIONS. The motion carried unanimously.

21. Elk Hunting Licenses Administrative Action

[Action Item: Wildlife]

The commission took administrative action to finalize license types and allocations for the Black Hills and Custer State Park Elk Hunting Seasons. Based on recently completed helicopter population survey data, licenses were increased for both seasons to increase hunting opportunity and maintain the elk population at the current population.

MOTIONED BY BARTLING, SECONDED BY WHITE TO ADOPT THE ELK HUNTING LICENSE TYPES AND ALLOCATIONS. The motion carried unanimously.

22. Youth Bounty Program Participation

[Info Item: Wildlife]

Chad Switzer, Wildlife Division Deputy Director, provided information regarding youth participation during the month of March for the Nest Predator Bounty Program. The month of March is open only for resident youth under the age of 18 to participate in the program. A few more youth submitted tails in March 2025 (n= 140) as compared to 131 youth in 2024. A total of 1,969 tails were submitted during March 2025 as compared to 1,684 in March 2024. This year all youth will be given a National Trappers Association Trapping Handbook and will be entered into the Benton Howe Weekly Giveaway Drawing for a chance to win a raccoon trapping starter kit.

23. Beaver Action Plan

[Info Item: Wildlife]

Alex Solem, Senior Wildlife Biologist, presented information on the Black Hills Beaver Action Plan. Details of this plan include objectives and strategies to manage beaver populations. A harvest matrix was outlined to guide season setting recommendations based on distribution rates throughout the Black Hills.

24. AIS Field Operations Update

[Info Item: Wildlife]

Davis, Fisheries Program Administrator, presented to the Commission an overview of 2025 Aquatic Invasive Species efforts by GFP. A 2025 AIS communications plan has been developed and implemented and will again focus on the message of "Clean, Drain, Dry". An AIS Awareness Week is planned leading up to Memorial Day weekend and will feature AIS content daily. The 2025 AIS Operational Plan outlines field activities by staff, such as detection and monitoring. Across the state, watercraft inspection/decontamination stations will also be operated starting prior to Memorial Day weekend.

25. Spawning and Stocking Update

[Info Item: Wildlife]

Jake Davis, Fisheries Program Administrator, presented to the Commission an update on current walleye spawning and fish stockings efforts by Aquatics staff. Walleye egg collections met the desired goal of approximately 80 million. Additional eggs were secured from neighboring states to ensure that enough eggs are hatched to meet stocking requests. Staff have also been busy transferring fish from hatcheries and one state water to another and have stocked fish into dozens of waterbodies within the state with additional stockings planned for the year.



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26. State Wildlife Action Plan

[Info Item: Wildlife]

Game, Fish and Parks has completed a draft revision of the South Dakota Wildlife Action Plan, which is now available for review. This strategic plan assesses the health of South Dakota's fish and wildlife and associated habitats, evaluates the problems they face, and outlines actions to help conserve them for the future. South Dakota's plan encourages voluntary partnerships among governmental entities, tribes, organizations, and private citizens to help prevent species from becoming endangered and to provide for the full array of fish, wildlife, native plants, and habitat diversity for future use and enjoyment by South Dakota's residents and visitors. An important tool is the identification of species of greatest conservation need, against which conservation actions are measured to assess the plan's effectiveness. The 2025 revision includes 245 plant and animal species, as well descriptions of their conservation challenges and suggested actions. The 2025 revision is the third major revision for South Dakota. All states must review their plans at least every 10 years and revise them to reflect new challenges and to build on known conservation strategies. Public involvement involving agencies, tribes, and the public is an important and required step in completing these regular plan updates.

27. License Sales

[Info Item: Wildlife]

Director Kirschenmann provided a summary of license sales through April 30. Overall, Kirschenmann shared with the commission that hunting and fishing license sales remain strong; well above last year's numbers and the 3-year average. Most notable are fishing license sales with small game hunting licenses having low activity but will pick up in August and September.

28. Adjourn

[Action Item]

A Regular Commission Meeting will be held on June 5-6, 2025, at the Dakota Event Center, in Aberdeen, SD starting at 1 pm CST.

MOTIONED BY BARTLING, SECONDED BY LOCKEN TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 10:05 AM MT ON May 9, 2025. Motion carried unanimously.

Submitted respectfully,

Kevin Robling, Department Secretary