

GFP Commission Meeting Minutes

Cadillac Jack's Resort | Deadwood, SD | October 5-6, 2023

Call Meeting to Order

Chair Rissler called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm MT at the Springhill Suites in Deadwood, SD on October 5, 2023. Commissioners Stephanie Rissler, Julie Bartling, Jim White, Robert Whitmyre, Travis Bies, Jon Locken, Bruce Cull, and Charles Spring were present. With all eight members present, a quorum was established. The public and staff can listen via SDPB Livestream and participate via conference or in person, with approximately 51 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 September 2023 meeting. Minutes are available at <https://gfp.sd.gov/commission/archives/>.

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

3. Additional Salary Days [Action Item]

Chair Rissler called for additional salary days from the Commissioners. None brought forward.

4. 2024 Commission Meeting Calendar Approval [Action Item]

Deputy Secretary Scott Simpson brought forth the proposed 2024 commission meeting schedule from the Department.

MOTIONED BY WHITE, SECONDED BY LOCKEN TO TABLE THE 2024 COMMISSION MEETING CALENDAR TO THE NOVEMBER COMMISSION MEETING. The motion carried unanimously.

5. South Dakota GoOutdoors Update [Info Item]

Keith Fisk, Licensing Program Administrator, gave an update on the South Dakota GoOutdoors licensing system.

Public Hearing

Scott Simpson, Deputy Secretary, opened the public hearing at 2:00 pm MT on October 5, 2023, for discussion from those in attendance on finalizations that the commission would be hearing for the day.

- 2:03 pm: Nancy Hilding from Black Hawk, SD representing the Prairie Hills Audubon Society testified concerning the Free Park Entrance and Fishing finalization.

Simpson closed the public hearing at 2:07 pm MT.

Open Forum

Scott Simpson, Deputy Secretary, opened the floor at 2:08 pm MT for discussion 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.

- 2:08 pm: Dean Rose of New Castle, WY testified in person in opposition to the nonresident one-day fishing license action item.
- 2:09 pm: Sean Burns of Edgemont, SD representing Black Hill Fishing Guides testified in person in opposition to the nonresident one-day fishing license action item.

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- 2:12 PM: Patrick Weimer of Spearfish, SD testified in person in support of the nonresident raccoon hunting with hounds petition.
- 2:16 pm: Jeremy Wells of Sturgis, SD testified in person in support of the nonresident raccoon hunting with hounds petition.
- 2:20 pm: Gene Parrow of Britton, SD testified virtually in support of the nonresident raccoon hunting with hounds petition.
- 2:21 pm: Julie Anderson of Rapid City, SD testified virtually in opposition to the nonresident raccoon hunting with hounds petition.
- 2:24 pm: Nancy Hilding of Black Hawk, SD representing the Prairie Hills Audubon Society testified virtually in opposition to the nonresident raccoon hunting with hounds petition.
- 2:28 pm: Zach Hunke of Watertown, SD representing the South Dakota Wildlife Federation testified in support of the Custer State Park airport decommissioning action item, in support of the nonresident one-day fishing license action item, in support of the Lake Byron land exchange.
- 2:30 pm: Lyssa Bruzelius of Pierre, SD representing South Dakota Missouri River Tourism testified in person in opposition to the nonresident one-day fishing license action item.
- 2:34 pm: Mike Allen of Chamberlain, SD testified virtually in opposition to the nonresident one-day fishing license action item.
- 2:37 pm: Cole Halmrast of Cogwells, ND representing North Dakota Coonhunter Association testified virtually in support of the nonresident raccoon hunting with hounds petition.
- 2:39 pm: Gary Allen of Chamberlain, SD testified virtually in opposition to the nonresident one-day fishing license action item.

Simpson closed the Open Forum at 2:43 pm MT.

6. Nonresident Raccoon Hunting with Hounds

[Petition]

Patrick Weimer of Spearfish, SD, submitted Petition #203, which would allow nonresidents the right to hunt with the aid of hounds with a limitation of a one raccoon harvest limit per licensed hunter.

The Department's recommendation to the Commission was presented by John Kanta, Terrestrial Section Chief. The department recommended denial based on the one raccoon harvest limit.

MOTIONED BY CULL, SECONDED BY BARTLING TO DENY PETITION #203 WHICH WOULD ALLOW FOR NONRESIDENTS TO HUNT RACCOON WITH HOUNDS. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

MOTIONED BY WHITMYRE, SECONDED BY BIES TO ADOPT RESOLUTION 23-29 WHICH DENIES PETITION #203. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

7. Free Park Entrance and Fishing

[Finalization]

With three public comments received (two supporting and one other) and no other comments shared with staff or commissioners, Parks and Recreation Director Jeff VanMeeteren made a recommendation on behalf of the Department to ask the Commission to finalize the elimination of Mother's Day and Father's Day from the list of exemptions for the park entrance license and fishing. The exemption has had no real affect in enticing new customers to purchase PEL's or fishing licenses with many regular customers supporting the decision as they feel state resources should not be given away. Open House Weekend which provides for free park entrance and fishing over 3 days (3rd weekend in May) will continue to be offered.

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MOTIONED BY BIES, SECONDED BY SPRING TO ADOPT THE FINALIZATION TO ELIMINATE MOTHER'S DAY AND FATHER'S DAY FROM THE LIST OF EXEMPTIONS FOR THE PARK ENTRANCE LICENSE AND FISHING. Motion carried unanimously.

8. Hunt for Habitat

[Finalization]

Tom Kirschenmann, Director of Wildlife, provided the background again for the commissioners on the reasons for bringing forward a change to the hunting packages included in the Hunt for Habitat. The result will be two more winners; a change from four hunting packages to six packages. The main difference is the removal of the antelope and create two stand-alone deer hunting licenses. The department is hopeful these changes will bring additional excitement to the opportunities and the result will be additional funds for creating or enhancing more habitat on Game Production Areas across the state.

MOTIONED BY LOCKEN, SECONDED BY BARTLING TO ADOPT THE HUNT FOR HABITAT FINALIZATION INCREASING THE HUNTING PACKAGES FROM FOUR TO SIX PACKAGES. Motion carried unanimously.

9. Custer State Park Airport

[Action Item]

After reviewing public input and discussing the potential closure with various pilot groups, Parks and Recreation Director Jeff VanMeeteren recommended to the Commission that the license be allowed to expire at the end of this year essentially closing the airport. The airport was originally built for fire protection and State of SD purposes and was never set up for recreational pilots. The Department of GFP does not desire to be in the airport management business. Given Wildland Fires and the State no longer use this airport, the limited use the airport receives from recreational pilots (estimated at 50-75 per year) who do not financially contribute to the airport and the pending repairs needed to the airport runway which would need to be supported by Department revenue with no federal funds available, the Commission put forward a resolution supporting the expiration/closure on Dec. 31, 2023.

MOTIONED BY WHITE, SECONDED BY WHITMYRE TO ALLOW THE CUSTER STATE PARK AIRPORT LICENSE TO LAPSE WITH DOT AERONAUTICS COMMISSION ON DECEMBER 31, 2023. Motion carried unanimously.

MOTIONED BY WHITE, SECONDED BY LOCKEN TO ADOPT RESOLUTION 23-30 WHICH WOULD ALLOW FOR THE DEPARTMENT TO LET THE PERMIT WITH DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION LAPSE. Motion carried unanimously.

10. Lake Alvin Dam Update

[Info Item]

Adam Kulesa, Planning and Development Administrator, provided a very brief verbal update was provided to the commission about the Lake Alvin Spillway replacement highlighted by an expected completion date for the spillway replacement of spring 2025. A few questions were asked by the commission and were appropriately answered. No follow up required.

11. Lake Byron Land Exchange

[Info Item]

Ryan Wendinger, Habitat Program Administrator, provided as an information item the proposed land exchange that would trade .21 acres at Lake Byron LUA (encroached on by a neighboring storage shed) in Beadle County with 61 acres of land near Grenville in Day County. The .21 acres was appraised at \$11,500 and property in Day County is valued at \$61,000. The owner of the Day County land, James Kurkowski, would like the property to be named after the Kurkowski family name. This proposal will be put back in front of the commission in November for their approval or denial.

12. Buffalo Roundup Recap

[Info Item]

Matt Snyder, Regional Supervisor for West Region, reported to the Commissioners that the 58th Annual Governors Round Up and Arts Festival was a huge success. Hearing nothing but compliments. The event

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saw record numbers with 22,590 visitors in attendance compared to 22,078 in 2015 for the 50th. Over 150 staff helped facilitate the event from across the Department. SDPB has live streamed the event the past three years with over 71,000 views at the time of the Commission meeting. Approximately 1,500 animals were rounded up by 60 horseback riders. The three-day Art's Festival had over 170 vendors with record numbers of 18,396 visitors taking part in the festival. Beautiful fall weather was experienced all three days. Friday night the park hosted 4 hot air balloons who performed a night lighting. What is next? Park staff will work buffalo through the corral system the week of October 10-13. Annual auction will take place on Saturday, November 4, 2023, live streamed in the Visitor Center. The Park plans on auctioning approximately 500 animals.

13. 25th Anniversary of Mickelson Trails Trek

[Info Item]

Dana Garry-Reiprich, George S. Mickelson Trails Manager, presented to the Commissioners that 600 folks attended the 3-day bicycle ride on the Mickelson Trail celebrating the 25th Anniversary. We had the pleasure of hosting 26 states, six 25-year riders and Mark and Amy Mickelson – son and daughter of the late Gov. George S. Mickelson and trail name's sake. The ride was a success with perfect weather, a wonderful group of likeminded individuals and 109 miles of pristine trail riding surface! The Anniversary celebration was held on Friday, September 15 at the Beacon in Custer, SD. The panel consisted of Mark Mickelson (stories of his Fathers work), Doug Hofer (Director of GFP at the time), Susan Johnson (sister of Guy Edwards, the catalyst behind the trail), Kevin Mills (Rails to Trails National Director)- They were able to give a cohesive overview of the challenges and successes of the early years of the Trail. The celebration was attended by about 400 individuals. A huge thanks to the Parks and Wildlife Foundation, and the Party planners: Kitty Kinsman, Steve Zellmer, Dave and Jane Snyder, Susan Johnson and many others for making the event a success.

14. Fall Events in the Parks

[Info Item]

Parks and Recreation Director Jeff VanMeeteren showcased a list of planned park events for the remainder of this fall. A PowerPoint was presented highlighting 10 of the Halloween focused fall events that will occur in October. These events are designed to: 1) draw new customers into our parks in the fall, 2) provide an opportunity for park staff to collaborate with their local communities in putting these events on, and 3) for staff to engage their creative talents in hosting these unique events.

15. Camping, Visitation and Revenue Report

[Info Item]

Parks and Recreation Director Jeff VanMeeteren shared with the commission that September was a good month for camping with only one out of the five weekends being rainy across the state. Overall visitation and camping unit numbers are tracking close to the 2022 numbers. Park entrance license sales in September were excellent with a 21% growth from 2022. Marketing the new 2024 PEL will continue over the fall including the holiday season for customer gift possibilities. Lodging marketing efforts are starting to pay off with numbers as of October 3, 2023, having already exceeded last year's total by 209 nights and we still have 3 months to go.

16. Nonresident One-Day Fishing Licenses

[Action Item]

Director Kirschenmann presented and reviewed the same presentation on nonresident one-day fishing licenses as shared during the September meeting. Discussion focused on the number of licenses purchased by individuals and how that number dramatically reduces once 3 licenses were surpassed. The consideration of removing the one-day license was focal point and what that would mean financially, how it would influence opportunities, and impacts to the industry. Several comments of opposition were shared with the commission, primarily from the guiding and tourism industry. The commission decided to table the conversation until their November meeting to obtain additional public input and to have the time to further weigh other options.

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MOTIONED BY WHITMYRE, SECONDED BY BIES TO TABLE TO NONRESIDENT ONE-DAY FISHING LICENSE ACTION ITEM UNTIL THE NOVEMBER MEETING. Motion carried unanimously.

17. CWD Update

[\[Info Item\]](#)

Byron Buckley, Senior Wildlife Biologist, provided an overview of the South Dakota GFP goals for CWD monitoring (determine presence/absence of CWD, reduce the spread of CWD, and inform the public). Chronic wasting disease has been present since 2001 and has spread into different areas of South Dakota. Typical testing for CWD is done with ELISA test (the gold standard) however, new testing methods (RT-QulC) are showing promising results when using different tissues sampled from cervids. We began a pilot study to examine the potential of using RT-QulC with testing elk ear tissue. At present we have found that biopsy of elk ears resulted in 85.7% sensitivity rate and 76.2% specificity rate and detection was best around the edges of the elk ears. Next steps are to examine new statistical methods for assessing diagnostics and potentially use Nano-QulC or MN-QulC to increase specificity rates and remote test, respectively. South Dakota GFP will be live-capturing elk (100-150) in January 2024 and place GPS transmitters on cows to estimate survival and CWD prevalence in the population. Additionally, soil samples will be collected starting in spring/summer of 2024 to test for CWD prevalence in the environment in the Black Hills.

18. Bighorn Sheep Auction Plan

[\[Info Item\]](#)

Chad Lehman, Senior Wildlife Biologist, presented to the commission that the "South Dakota Bighorn Sheep Action Plan 2023-2027" outlines management priorities and strategies for bighorn sheep in South Dakota. Bighorn sheep, known for their ability to thrive in challenging environments, were reintroduced in the early 1920s after their extinction in the late 1890s. The plan offers historical context, survey methods, and objectives for sustainable bighorn sheep management. It addresses the ongoing issue of respiratory disease in these populations, highlighting the importance of disease research and management. The plan's objectives encompass monitoring diseases, assessing population status, habitat protection and augmentation, scientific research, and public education. It is considered a flexible working document that will evolve with new data. This plan will guide decision-making and collaboration with various stakeholders to ensure the successful management of bighorn sheep in South Dakota.

19. Elk Fall Classifications Survey Results

[\[Info Item\]](#)

Byron Buckley, Senior Wildlife Biologist, provided the commissioners with South Dakota GFP objective for elk populations (6-8,000 Black Hills; 5-600 Custer State Park; the majority (60%) of the bulls to be 4+ years old; minimum firearm harvest at 75%). Fall herd composition surveys were conducted in August 2023, pre-hunting season random ground counts, where observers counted calf, cow, and bull elk to estimate sex and age ratio. A total of 2,005 individuals were observed with 1,113 cows, 568 calves, and 324 bulls across the entire Black Hills. Most elk were observed in H3 and H2 hunting units. Age ratio, recruitment, was above the 10-year average for the Black Hills (53 calves:100 cows) indicating good recruitment. We anticipate our late winter elk surveys in January 2024 will be higher than the population projection from our statistical models. We will combine all of our collected data (harvest, recruitment, survey numbers, and survival) to estimate the 2024 population and provide a projected trend for the next 4 years.

20. AIS Program Update

[\[Info Item\]](#)

Jake Davis, Fisheries Program Administrator, provided the Commission with an update on the Departments Aquatic Invasive Species program. Thus far, 18,159 watercraft inspections have occurred statewide, compared to 18,049 at the same time last year. The Sand Lake Wildlife Refuge, Roy Lake and the James and Big Sioux Rivers are now considered infested with zebra mussels, as well.

21. Lake Chub Status

[\[Info Item\]](#)

Chelsey Pasbrig, Aquatic Biologist, provided a brief update on the status of Lake Chub in the Black Hills. Lake Chub are a peripheral species, native to the Black Hills and Little Missouri River but have never

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had a large distribution in South Dakota. Recent surveys found that Lake Chub were found in Boxelder Creek and its tributary, Bogus Jim. Lake Chub favored habitats with slow water velocities, spring-fed influence and low trout abundances. The genetic structure does not support enough genetic divergence to manage Lake Chub in the Black Hills as more than one population. Moving forward SDGFP and its partners plan to continue monitoring, conservation planning, and translocation efforts.

22. GFP Habitat and Public Use Assessment

[Info Item]

Ryan Wendinger, Habitat Program Administrator, reported that GFP conducted a recent internal Game Production Area assessment was completed to rank all 723 GPAs/WAA on a scale of 1-10 for habitat and public use opportunities. The presentation compared the 2018 assessment with the one just completed. Rankings went up to an average of 6.4 for habitat and 6.8 for public use opportunities, an increase in both since 2018. A list of total accomplishments was also shared showing what has been done between 2018 and 2022. Challenges and successes were shared and a thanks to staff and various partners who help complete a lot of projects on GPAs.

23. Western South Dakota Shooting Complex Update

[Info Item]

John Kanta, Terrestrial Section Chief, reported GFP is setting out to construct a world class shooting sports complex located in Meade County. The mass grading/dirt work for the SD Shooting Sports Complex was advertised for bid on August 3rd. Bids were accepted through August 30th and a bid opening was held on August 31st. Groundbreaking is expected to occur in early 2024 or sooner. The next phase of the project for the finish work and structures is scheduled to go out for bid on November 9th and the bid opening will be December 7th. GFP advertised a request for proposals in late August for an individual or organization to assist with fundraising efforts for the shooting sports complex. GFP received four bids and Tammy Bohn from Sturgis, SD was selected to fill the position. The SD Shooting Sports Complex web page has been updated and there are new 3D renderings of the facility there. GFP is actively looking for sponsors and funding to support this project.

24. Fall Fishing and Hunting Forecast & License Sales Update

[Info Item]

Director Kirschenmann provided a brief update on license sales to date. Primary discussion point was the department will be watching closely how NR license sales progress over the next few weeks, in particular the opening weekend of the pheasant season. Kirschenmann also talked about results of license sales so far for both archery deer and archery antelope in light of the changes implemented to reduce the number of hunters on public land while still retaining unlimited options on private land. Results indicate fewer licenses have been sold for both seasons. He also talked about current seasons in progress and the success heard from across the state for seasons such as dove, grouse, archery deer and antelope, as well as elk hunting. A high level of optimism exists for the upcoming pheasant season as we continue to hear positive comments from all corners of the state.


Adjourn

[Action Item]

Next meeting is scheduled for November 2, 2023, at the Prairie Shores Resort near Madison, South Dakota.

MOTIONED BY BIES, SECONDED BY BARTLING TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. Motion carried unanimously.

Submitted respectfully,



Kevin Robling, Department Secretary