

# Public Comments

## Custer State Park Airport Decommissioning

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**Roland Keranen**

**Spearfish SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

1. For lower-cost and ease of maintenance, turn it into a turf runway. 2. Provide campsites and shelters (much like a state park, maybe not as extensive) to enable camping by pilots and their companions 3. Enable some sort of transportation options to area towns 4. This would build on the Black Hills' attraction as a tourist destination 5. Turf runway makes it accessible to most general aviation aircraft, so the potential users are many 6. Promote it on South Dakota travel sites as well as aviation magazines. Thanks!

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**Dennis Knuckles**

**Custer SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I wish to go on record for saving Custer State Park Airport, 3V0. As a local 20 year SD pilot who is based out of the Custer County Airport I have used 3V0 for recreational access to the park numerous times and on several occasions used it as a safety option when the weather or NW winds make landing at Custer (KCUT) impossible. I can't emphasize the importance of having this airstrip as a safety option when flying in the Black Hills for all pilots flying in the area. Recreational aviation is a growing in numbers and CSP could with a few primitive or cabin facilities provide for the enjoyment of this segment of its users: whether paved or turf. I've personally walked the length of the airstrip within the last two weeks and fall to see the "dire" state of required repairs articulated in SDGP statement for decommissioning it.

I understand the desire for the park to get rid of this public resource since it apparently has no use for it presently, however this goes beyond the park's need. I encourage you to explore cooperative alternatives to preserve this recreational asset. For example, the Recreational Aviation Foundation has grant money and volunteers for projects that qualify.

Recreational airports in other states have benefitted from successful public/private partnerships for preservation and maintenance. I personally would be willing to donate my time and money to assist in this endeavor. As a past member of the Civil Air Patrol we routinely used 3V0 for search and rescue options/training, as does the National Guard. Keeping CSP airstrip operational also keeps a much needed asset feasible for firefighting, S&R, and life-flight missions. Time is of the essence in these situations, flying from distance sources steals that time that could be spent saving lives or resources. Please reconsider keeping this airport open.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Dennis Knuckles

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**James Grainger**

**Sheridan WY**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

Good afternoon,

I am writing you today to voice opposition for decommissioning Custer State Park airport.

We enjoy visiting the airport often with flying peers (photos attached) for group events, picnics or close access to State Park.

As we have witnessed elsewhere, once you close an airport. It is gone forever. We are happy to get involved to help keep the airport open and available to the Public!

Get those wheels up...>J.T.

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**Steve Behrends**

**Livingston TX**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Once the airport is gone, it's gone. Please keep the airport open. It could be needed in the future and it's easier to keep it now than to rebuild later.

Look at what happened to this country's railway system. They got rid of all the secondary rail lines. Cars and trucks right? Well, think about how easy it would be to move stuff by rail NOW, if we still had some tracks to run trains on. You never know what the future brings, keep the airport!

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**Ben Klaas**

**Sioux Falls SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I recently received my Private Pilot license and it is unfortunate to hear there is consideration of removing an amazing back country field... Please keep it and use as a tool to draw more people into our area . I know it is on my list of places to go , and hope I still get the opportunity.

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**Martin Wallace**

**Broomfield CO**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

No comment text provided.

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**Lacey Utter**

**Billings SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

PLEASE do not decommission this airport!! General aviation relies on these small strips, especially out here in the west where options to land can be few and far between. Safe places to go are vital for normal flying operations and offer opportunities not just for a place to land but also to support local communities.

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**Mark Fiegen**

**Sioux Falls SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

No comment text provided.

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**Craig Johnson**

**Rapid City SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I oppose the decommissioning of the CSP airport. I'm a flight instructor and the airport is very important for training flight students. I use it for short cross country flights from Rapid City. It is also a challenging airport to land at for students. Also for making steep approaches and other principles of mountain flying. Also for short field landings and takeoffs. It's also a valuable airport if you need to make an emergency landing while crossing the Black Hills. Not to mention the scenic qualities of the field and its proximity to the Game Lodge campground, the visitors center, lodging and hiking. Very few state or national parks have airports available for public use. The CSP airport is a real gem. I hope we don't lose it. Thank you.

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**Patrick Wellnitz**

**Whitewater WI**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Access to the airport is limited as the fence/ gate is locked. I've planned flying in and meeting people there but with a locked gate, it's not workable.

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**David Shiffer**

**Woodstock OH**

**Position:** other

**Comment:**

I flew from Ohio to Custer State Park to camp at the airport. This was with my two teenage daughters. It was a great experience and we all loved it. I urge South Dakota to keep the airport open. Services are non-existent at the airport. I think the airport could generate more use if it was promoted to the flying public and/or there was a way to get around the park. I hope you would consider it as a gateway to the park. You should consider a bison watching building near the airport that serves meals. That would get pilots (and the general public) there eating meals and possibly camping overnight. We love traveling through South Dakota by airplane, the airports are all a state treasure!

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**Gerald Rieber**

**Watertown SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Would like to see this repurposed to a fly in back country destination for general aviation. Convert to/Maintain grass strip for GA activity to include primitive a country style airplane camping in the park. The Recreational Aviation Foundation (RAF) may have resources to contribute. It would be a shame to lose this, or any strip, but I understand the cost of maintaining a paved hard surface runway. Please consider repurposing to maintain and encourage general aviation access to Custer State Park.

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**Arthur Howard**

**Lake City MN**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

It would be nice to convert this to a grass strip. Grass takes much less maintenance.

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**Erik Forman**

**Brandon SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Last Year I flew to the airport for the first time with my girlfriend. I parked it there while we used the nearby trail to go on a hike. It also allows a brief opportunity to see the wildlife while flying in the approach. I was going to go again this year while I took my annual trip out to the hills with my father, however the National Guard was utilizing the space for training and I was unsure if any of that was closed off. So I missed the opportunity to take him there.

Yes I agree that this airfield doesn't get utilized often. However, I believe that is because it really isn't advertised anywhere. It is a hidden gem that many people from outside the state just don't know about. Every time I fly to Custer County Airport I meet a lot of people that aren't from South Dakota. Many of them are coming through here for the first time visiting the Black Hills. Yes this airport doesn't replace Custer County Airport since it has facilities, however it does provide an opportunity to be completely away from the "city". Perhaps if the state looks at what other states are doing in similar outdoors locations (Johnson Creek Idaho as an example) and perhaps this location can be turned around to make it a premier landing site. It doesn't have to be a paved runway. Perhaps converting it to grass would be more feasible. I believe with a small investment and a targeted audience with the aviation community it could be a win win with tourism growth.

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**David Christy**

**Parsons KS**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Any small airport that has evidence of lower traffic count become victims of closure. These airports need stronger FAA support to improve the airport services that will encourage appeal and growth. Do not close small airports. I am the airport manager of the Parsons Tri-City airport. And have been a pilot for over 44 years and have seen the intentional neglect of these airports. Build them up to better service GA, not tear them down.

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**Kyle Lewis**

**Frederick MD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

No comment text provided.

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**Jeffrey Russell**

**Waunakee WI**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

No comment text provided.

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**Brenden Hendrickson**

**Custer SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

This letter is in support of keeping Custer State Park (3V0) Airport open.

I am the airport manager for Custer County Airport (CUT) and I am expressing the concerns of the pilots who frequent this area.

If the weather is bad in Custer, the pilots will land at Custer State Park.

If the crosswinds are too strong, they will divert and land at 3VO. 3VO is used as an emergency landing airport for planning single engine flights into Custer. If an engine failure occurs. They can turn around and return to 3VO. Once they are on the west side of Mt. Coolidge they can glide into CUT. Without 3VO the pilots will be making a crash landing off airport.

3VO is used for training flights and recurrent training flights.

Custer County Airport is a challenging airport due to density altitude and variable crosswinds, so most training is done somewhere else, usually 3V0 because of safety concerns. Please do not close 3VO

Respectfully,  
Brenden Hendrickson  
Custer County Airport Manager

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**Larry Vrooman**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

1) It makes more sense to keep the airport but reduce maintenance costs. Ideally the asphalt could be removed and the existing runway planted to grass and then maintained as a turf runway.

2) A more austere approach would be to close the asphalt runway (yellow Xs painted on the approach ends) and mark out a grass runway along side the closed runway using yellow cones to identify the ends.

3) The number of aircraft using the runway was no doubt substantially higher than 50 in 2022. Many land but don't stop shut down, and many (if not most) of the pilots who stop don't sign a register. Many airports have registers where the last entry may be months props despite daily flight operations.

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**Mathieu Labs**

**Greenville WI**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

Please keep this airport open. Was planning to fly there in 2024.

# Hunt for Habitat

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**Don Harrison**

**Woodstock GA**

**Position:** other

**Comment:**

Your new website is amazingly confusing when all you want to do is to buy a non-resident hunting license!!!!  
:https://license.gooutdoorsouthdakota.com/Licensing/CustomerLookup.aspx

When you arrive at the site, you see a female hunter and "Click Here For Information On License" in large font located right in the center of the screen. The correct spot to purchase a license is a tiny little box on the LEFT of the screen. It should be just the opposite.

Please make a LARGE click that says BUY A SD LICENSE HERE!!!!. Information on licenses should be a sub-click of Purchase a License.

I have hunted in SD for 23 years and never had a problem buying a license until I encountered this new website.

Suggest you get someone who does not work for your web site construction company to look in to todays site and try to buy a license. VERY CONFUSING.

I hope that you will pass this constructive criticism on to the web site producer.

Thank you, Don Harrison

# Mountain Lion Season - Expanded Use of Hounds

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**Casey Hislop**

**Sturgis SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

The only proper way to harvest a lion , bobcat or bear is to tree them with hounds so you can properly identify the sex of the game treed. This has worked in many other states who have found this is the proper way to identify sex of animal who may get harvested. GFP uses hounds and has houndsmen on the payroll that do this very same thing the rest of the public also should have the same rights as South Dakota Tax Paying Residents. Properly manage a population with the use of dogs and do away with modern firearm season ( Boot hunters tend to shoot the first cat or bear they see, especially if it's there first). This will eliminate the harvesting of small young wildlife. I am 100% for the use of Hounds throughout the prairie and hills of South Dakota.

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**Paul Sand**

**Rosholt SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

I support the use of hounds for hunting mountain lions. i have no problem with the ethics of using dogs in this manner. It is a very good way of assessing where the overall population of mountain lions is at.

# Nonresident One-Day Fishing License

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**Justin Allen**

**Pierre SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

I support eliminating the one day non resident fishing license. I also support getting rid of the two-one day free fishing days. If NRs want to enjoy SD resources they should fund the programs thru licenses fee like everyone else.



RECEIVED

SEP 29 2023

Dept. of Game, Fish & Parks  
Pierre, S.D. 57501

# South Dakota Pilots Association



September 26, 2023

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**Executive Director**  
Currently Vacant

SDPA website  
<https://sdpilots.com>

Mr. Jeff VanMeeteren  
Director of Parks and Recreation  
South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks

Dear Mr VanMeeteren,

SDPA is a non-profit organization of 416 pilots, mechanics, and aviation enthusiasts who have banded together to promote general aviation interests in South Dakota.

We recently become aware of the South Dakota GFP's intent to close the Custer State Park Airport. This information has caused our organization great concern as we know that many of our members use this airport for pilot training and access to Custer State Park. A number of our members have reached out to the SDPA leadership to request we help keep this airport open.

The SDPA knows that this airport has served many important roles in the history of the State Park/Blackhills and could serve for many more years with proper engagement. We have been approached by the Recreational Aviation Foundation to see if we could work together with your agency to help keep this airport open. We hope you would be open to a meeting with RAF and SDPA to hear some options that could work to keep this valuable resource open for years to come.

Thank you for your time.

Best Regards,

  
Dale G Knuth  
SDPA President

South Dakota Pilots Association is exempt from federal income taxes under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. SDPA is a nonprofit charity; our federal tax identification number is 80-0615983.

*SD Pilot Association  
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*Dedicated to the promotion of General Aviation in South Dakota.*



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September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Jeff VanMeeteren, Director of Parks and Recreation  
South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks Commission  
523 East Capitol Ave  
Pierre, SD 57501

**TRANSMITTED VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL TO: [Jeff.VanMeeteren@state.sd.us](mailto:Jeff.VanMeeteren@state.sd.us)**

**RE: Custer State Park Airport (3V0) / AOPA Public Comments**

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA), the world's largest aviation organization, is a strong advocate for safe, efficient, accessible, and sustainable airports. Small community airports support general aviation daily. Flight training, aero-medical, law enforcement, recreation, and business travel are only a few of the uses general aviation airports see every day.

AOPA encourages the Game, Fish, and Parks Commission to maintain the Custer State Airport as a public-use airport. We believe that the airport has a high value to recreational aviation, providing direct access to Custer State Park by general aviation. The airport could also be used as a medical airlift location, given its strategic location within the state park.

AOPA understands the major financial responsibility associated with a runway pavement reconstruction project since the airport is not eligible for Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Airport Improvement Plan (AIP) grants. AOPA supports an effort to remove the troubled pavement, create a turf runway, and look at private investment into infrastructure to support the access and sustainability of the airport. The Recreational Aviation Foundation (RAF) is a nationally recognized aviation organization that has broad experience in coordinating with private, local, state, and federal agencies on recreational airstrip investment. The RAF has a large network of volunteers and financial investment, through an airfield grant program, to procure and create unique aviation experiences. Custer State Park Airport aligns with the mission and goals of the RAF, and AOPA membership for access to small general aviation airports.

If the commission were to agree to invest in a turf runway for Custer State Park Airport, there would be no loss of utility to the airport, and this would encourage more use by recreational aviators. The maintenance of a turf runway, when compared to the maintenance of a paved runway over time is much less. No crack sealing, no crack mitigation, no seal coating, and no reconstruction or rehabilitation every 15-20 years. With assistance from the RAF, volunteers may be utilized to maintain certain aspects of the airport, and the RAF, along with AOPA, could market

the airport to our members and users. The underutilized airport has the potential to become a better-suited facility for aviators and visitors to Custer State Park.

AOPA is willing to answer any questions, provide more direct feedback, or facilitate any future discussions with our membership.

Submitted Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kyle Lewis', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kyle Lewis  
Great Lakes Regional Manager • Airports and State Advocacy  
Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association  
[kyle.lewis@aopa.org](mailto:kyle.lewis@aopa.org)

cc:

*Jack Dokken, Air, Rail and Transit Program Manager*  
*Jon Becker, Aeronautics Planning Engineer*  
*Thomas Koch, Airport Inspector*  
*Brad Remmich, Airport Construction Specialist*  
*Bill McGlynn, President, RAF*  
*John McKenna, Chairman, RAF*  
*Jeff Russell, Director, RAF*  
*Karl Jungclaus, RAF SD State Liaison*