THIS IS THE LETTER THAT MEMBERS OF SDWF'S EXECUTIVE BOARD DELIVERED AND READ AT THE NOVEMBER GFP COMMISSION IN MITCHELL

Dear Secretary Hepler and GFP Commissioners,

We are writing to express our continuing strong support for the acquisition and management of public wildlife lands and fishing access areas by the Department and the Commission. At your November, 2015 meeting, the Commission has before it several action and information items related to land acquisitions. We want you to know that we support all the land purchase proposals now before you and we add our full support for future acquisitions.

As you know, among the most numerous complaints by sportsmen and women is a lack of quality areas to hunt and fish. Access to private land has been one of increasing difficulty and commercialized. While charging a fee for hunting is certainly a right of the landowner, the net effect is that wildlife, a publicly owned and managed resource, is becoming more and more privatized because most sportmen and women are simply not able to pay the fees charged by commercial operators. As commercialization increases, so does pressure on public lands. South Dakota has 77,121 square miles, of which roughly 440 square miles are state-owned Game Production Areas (GPAs). This figure includes the thousands of acres along the Missouri river turned over to the GFP by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers under “Title VI”. The total acreage of the GFP works out to be less than 1% of the total SD land mass, and these GPAs must also be shared with nonresident users.

We applaud Governor Daugaard’s decision to ease his moratorium on land purchases after two years of potential acquisitions of new GPAs being put on hold. While many excellent projects were abandoned during the moratorium, the GFP is now once again able to purchase land from willing sellers for the use and benefit of the public.

To be accurate and fair, the GFP has large partnership programs with Federal agencies and some Non-Government Organizations to acquire access to land by lease and/or easement contracts. Some for the opening day of pheasant season. According to GFP’s survey, traditional pheasant hunting areas are a special occasion. It is really second to none.”

Secretary Kelly Hepler. “It’s one of the reasons I came back to South Dakota. The Fishing for untold thousands of years in our prairie state.

By contrast, land owned by the GFP is managed for wildlife production and public use in perpetuity by the state. The wetlands will not be tiled and drained, tree belts will not be bulldozed, and virgin soils will not be plowed to make way for more crops. The natural features of the land will be there for generations to come, because management decisions are not made according to commodity prices or on how to raise more livestock. In general, public land managed for wildlife is far superior to GFP purposes than are private lands managed for private profits, especially in the long term. The undersigned groups are among just a few of the many NGOs who strongly support the GFP Department and GFP Commission in its legal and ethical responsibility to work with willing landowners to acquire and manage publicly owned land for the benefit of sportsmen and all the people of the state and its visitors. These organizations represent thousands of South Dakota sportsmen and many others who visit our great state each year. In summary, we wish to emphasize a very few major points:

• Sportsmen are not against paying for access, as such; they simply ask to own the land, through the Department of Game, Fish and Parks and the GFP Commission actions and oversight. When there are no markets for land, because of, say, the long-held right to sell the land to the purchaser of their choice with no government interference.

• The annual cost of managing an average GPA is about the same average cost of renting land, although there are variables depending on the GPA and on the particular rental program. We believe the price and closing costs. However, the long-term value of public land for sportsmen is almost always better than relatively short-term leases of private lands. In addition, GFP is required to pay the full amount of local property taxes just like any landowner in our State.

• GFP land managers have demonstrated the ability to manage these lands based upon the needs of those willing to pay through the purchase of licenses to hunt and fish. GFP Department Staff have a good record of land stewardship aimed at satisfying needs for game and non-game species alike, while also meeting the demands of weed control, fencing and working with adjoining and local landowners to provide best management practices.

These are but a few of the reasons why we fully support the purchase of more public land from willing sellers to be used and managed as GFP. Thank you for your time and attention, and please continue with your work to increase the acreage of publicly owned land in the state.

PIERRE, S.D. - South Dakota’s “army of orange” was out in full force on Sunday, Oct. 25, as the annual pheasant brood survey up 42 percent from 2014, friends and family shared plenty of pheasants, fun and fellowship.

"The traditions of South Dakota’s opening day of pheasant season are known worldwide,” said South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Executive Director’s Presidents Column

Barcoded Flats

"The traditions of South Dakota’s opening day of pheasant season is a special occasion. It is really second to none.” According to GFP’s survey, traditional pheasant hunting areas such as Winner, Pierre, Mobridge and Mitchell all showed at

Farmers- need a tax deduction this year? Consider donating some grain or land to the SDWF. You will get a tax break and your support of the SDWF will help protect the land and wildlife you love.
least 40 percent increases in the pheasants-per-mile index. Other popular pheasant destinations such as Chamberlain and Huron had well over 30 percent increases. All areas evaluated in the brood report showed a minimum of a 17 percent increase.

Reports from the fields across the state indicate the following:

• Central S.D., Nathan Baker, GFP regional game manager
  * Average bird count per hunter ranged from 1 bird in most of the region, to 1.5-2 birds in Lyman and Hughes Counties.

• Most popular area to hunt in region: Hunters were walking standing crops, food plots, and some cattail sloughs and having success. There is still quite a bit of standing corn and sunflowers across the region, and harvest is in full swing.

• Northeast S.D., Jacqui Ermer, GFP regional game manager
  * Average bird count per hunter was less than one bird in the east and 1.5-2 birds in Edmunuds and Faulk Counties.

• Most popular area to hunt in region: Public lands in the western parts of the region were good. Hunters were walking sloughs, food plots and grass.

• Southeast S.D., Josh Elger, GFP regional game manager
  * Average bird count per hunter ranged from .5 to 1.5 going from east to west, with Beadle, Aurora and Jerauld Counties being the best.

• Most popular area to hunt in the region: Many crops still in the field in eastern South Dakota. Hunters were finding success in grass and sloughs.

• Hunting pressure was light in many areas.

• Western S.D., John Kanta, GFP regional game manager
  * Average bird count per person ranged from .5 to 1 bird across the region. A few reports of hunters limiting in the far northwestern part of the state as well.

• Most popular area to hunt in region: Hunters were finding birds in tree belts, food plots/crops, sloughs and grass.

• Statewide Hunting Incidents
  * There were two hunting incidents to report on at the time of this release. A young hunter in the southeastern part of the state fell while chasing a wounded bird. The gun discharged when they went to pick it up, injuring his hand. A hunter in Faulk County was struck in the face with pellets, receiving minor injuries.

“We are pleased to see production was up for the second year in a row, however sustaining pheasant numbers and the S.D. hunting tradition will require long-term habitat efforts,” Hepler said. “We are hopeful that the new Habitat Pays program will make it easier for landowners to find the programs and information they need to provide more quality habitat across the state. Working with the Department of Agriculture, the Governor’s Pheasant Habitat Workgroup, landowners and partnering organizations, I believe the future of pheasants and pheasant hunting is strong. Across this state, people look forward to and depend upon pheasant season for our livelihood and our quality of life.”

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President's Column by Rich Widman

Pheasant hunting season is well underway in South Dakota, and as of this writing, I've only been out twice! Some things are apparently more important than hunting—or so my wife says. We just got back from our first overseas vacation. We went to England to visit my daughter, a college sophomore who is studying for a semester in Anwick, Northumberland, about a four-hour train ride north of London. She and her classmates live and take classes in Anwick Castle, which has served as a filming location for some of the Harry Potter movies and an episode of the PBS series Downton Abbey, just to name a few.

Now, I love my daughter, and I enjoyed the trip, but I did miss hunting. Everywhere I went in the countryside, I felt like the pheasants were mocking me! I could see them along the train tracks and all over the fields, but I couldn't shoot any of them! Talking with some of the locals about their hunting traditions reminded me why SDWF's work is so important. In England, only the landowners, or the nobility, or those wealthy enough to pay sky-high fees are able to hunt. SDWF has fought for many years to keep the European model of hunting out of South Dakota, and we need to continue fighting those members of our legislature who want to bring more paid hunting to the state. We also need to continue supporting Game Fish & Parks' purchase of public lands to provide hunting access for the general population throughout South Dakota.

With SDWF leading this effort, you would think that every hunter would be on board, and we'd have 150,000 members and $2 million in the kitty. But we're not even close. Why? Did you know SDWF Board members Bill Antonides, Jerry Lulewicz, Mark Widman and I were in Mitchell at the GF&P commission meeting this past month hearing about their purchase of public lands so current and future generations are guaranteed to have areas they can use? Did you know SDWF Executive Director Chris Hesla recently testified in court against the illegal closing of roads by townships trying to prevent sportswomen from accessing public hunting and fishing areas? Did you know there are still people trying to close public waters, and SDWF is leading the charge to make sure that doesn't happen? Why aren't more sportswomen concerned? Some say it's because people don't get involved until something personally affects them, and by then it's too late!

For four years now, I've asked each of you to sign up "JUST ONE" of your fellow outdoorswomen/men so we could double our membership every year and put less pressure on current members. However, in that time, we've only added 300 members. I've also asked for an extra $10 from each member to make sure our Camo Coalition has the $30,000 we need to support our lobbyist and cover legal expenses. We've haven't been able to raise that amount yet. We did cover $25,000 last year, so we're getting close, but why don't more sportswomen/men take care of this group that takes care of them?

I know you care, but what about your fellow sportswomen/women? If they love the outdoors as much as you do, why don't they help protect it? Maybe they don't realize how crucial SDWF's work is. So this is a call to action! Spread the word! Go out and get "JUST ONE" other sportswoman/men to join and support us all! I'll jumpstart the fund, but again, it's nowhere near what we need. If you're a sportswoman bring in over $500 million to this state; why can't we find any money for conservation? How about all the businesses that benefit from local and out-of-state sportswomen make a small contribution? Here's the chance to help support this state and ourselves at the same time! Spread the word today—-for a stronger tomorrow for our outdoors.

Just do it!

Over the years SDWF has lost many members who epitomized the very essence of what it means to be a true outdoorsman/woman. Most recently, cancer took Chuck McMullen of Brookings. It's not like he has left his mark on this Earth. A little time SDSU biology professor and administrator, Chuck was on the Brookings Wildlife Federation board and was instrumental in motivating Brookings to become the first $5,000 “Big Dog” club. Even in death his contribution lives on, as he requested that memorials be directed to BFWF. I know he is not resting in peace, as there are far too many birds to hunt in paradise!

I did get to hunt opening weekend with my brother, but with only one of his two dogs—Charlie. Buddy, a 15-year-old English Pointer who is Charlie's father, had to be left behind because he is just not able to hunt anymore. He was, as most dog owners would say, the best hunting dog ever. His nose and points were awesome. My 9-year-old cocker spaniel, Pokey (aka Fang), also can't hunt this year because he tore his ACL. He's never been quite as useful in the field as Charlie and Buddy, but still misses having him out there, and he hates to be left behind. Losing hunting companions, whether human or canine, is a sad reality, but we'll always have the memories. Please share those memories!

Our opening day started on the same public lands as usual—along with several other groups, as usual. As you may recall from a previous column, four years ago I was peppered with stalkers on this public land because it is so overcrowded. Some say that we don't need more public lands; we just need private walk-in areas. Well, our experience provides a great argument against depending on walk-in areas, because the county where we hunt used to have several, but they have all been leased and are no longer available. Public lands, on the other hand, will always be there for all to use.

Like everyone else, we had heard the reports that pheasant numbers are up this year, and although we got our limit, we walked five miles each day (verified by phone app) to get them and still didn't see the number of birds we should have. I need to remind folks we are nowhere near where we should be for pheasant population or conservation in this state that proclaims itself the “Pheasant Capital of the World.” There is a lot of work yet to be done.

Obviously, we need the support of our farmers and ranchers, and some of this work requires funding. Unfortunately, the Governor's Conservation Fund came up really short last legislative session, but there have been renewed efforts to get that money back for $1 million again this year. The state had good news with a $30 million surplus last year, so some of that money can be used to jumpstart the fund, but it's nowhere near what we need. SDWF sportswomen bring in over $500 million to this state; why can't we find any money for conservation? How about all the businesses that benefit from local and out-of-state sportswomen make a small contribution? Here's the chance to help support this state and ourselves at the same time! Spread the word today— for a stronger tomorrow for our outdoors.

Executive Director's Update by Chris Hesla

Last week, several members of the SDWF Executive Board and I delivered the letter on the front page of this Out-of-Doors, supportive and encouraging the GF&P to buy land for public use.

Governor Daugaard had placed a moratorium on land purchases a few years ago and has now eased the restriction. The SD Game, Fish & Parks Commission has recently returned to land purchase consideration.

At the November Commission meeting, the Commission agreed to pay $535,000 for 320 acres in northeast Brown County, owned by Terry Cutler and Jill Cutler of Groton. The plan calls for the land to become a public game production area.

After approval of the purchase, Commissioner Scott Phillips asked if it’s time for an official plan that covers goals, locations, timing, and purposes for GF&P lands purchases. “Where are we going and how do we know when we get there?” wondered Phillips, who ranches and runs a commercial hunting lodge 18 miles northwest of New Underwood. Commissioner Phillips didn’t sound keen on buying more land.

SDWF Camo Coalition President and past SDWF President Bill Antonides presented the letter to the Commission. “We want you to know that we support all the land purchase proposals now before you and we add our full support for future acquisitions” Antonides said, reading from the letter.

Bill went on to say the groups who signed onto the SDWF Camo Coalition’s position letter on land purchases applaud the Governor’s decision to lift the purchase moratorium. While many excellent projects were abandoned during the moratorium, the GF&P is now once again able to purchase land from willing sellers for the use and benefit of the public.

The next purchase could be 400 acres adjacent to the Hedman game production area in Day County, according to Paul Coughlin who handles land purchases for GF&P. Hopefully the Commission continues to agree with these beneficial purchases.
Thanks to those of you that attended the SDWF Camo Coalition’s screening of the Hunting Film Tour and also those of you that purchased chances on our fundraising raffle board.

The SDWF Camo Coalition hosted screenings of the Hunting Film Tour in Sioux Falls, Pierre, and Rapid City this fall. Plans are already underway to host the shows again in fall of 2016, hopefully in even more towns!

Please encourage your fellow sportsmen and women to sign up for the free SDWF Camo Coalition and join the South Dakota Wildlife Federation - the organizations that are fighting every day for your rights to enjoy our fine outdoor traditions here in South Dakota.

Greetings, and I hope you’ve been enjoying some great waterfowl and upland bird hunting so far this season!

“The Hunting Film Tour is the best thing to happen to hunting in a long time!” Said at least one person somewhere... Year 2 was a wildly successful Tour... read more at http://huntingfilmtour.com

The winners have been randomly drawn and are as follows:
Jim Keyser - Kimber Custom II Two-Tone .45 handgun
Paul Bezdjcek - $100 Running’s Gift Certificates
Lynn Bennett - Ramkota Inn Sioux Falls free night

SOUTH DAKOTA’S REVISED PHEASANT MANAGEMENT PLAN AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW

PIERRE, S.D. - The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks’ (GFP) has completed a revision of the current pheasant management plan and is seeking comments and reviews from the public.

“The revised Pheasant Management Plan refines the approach the Department will take to manage this popular game bird and its associated habitats,” stated Tony Leif, director of the Division of Wildlife. “The focus of the plan is habitat and the importance of private landowners and includes many of the recommendations brought forward during the 2013 Governor’s Pheasant Habitat Summit and recommendations from the Governor’s Pheasant Habitat Work Group.”

The draft revision can be found online at: http://gfp.sd.gov/hunting/small-game/pheasants.aspx. Written comments on the draft plan can be sent to 523 E. Capitol Ave., Pierre, S.D. 57501, or emailed to PheasantPlan@state.sd.us. Comments must be received by Nov. 22, 2015, and include your full name and city of residence.

TURN IN POACHERS BENEFITS S.D. WILDLIFE

PIERRE, S.D. - The Game, Fish and Parks Department is reminding citizens that the South Dakota Turn In Poachers (TIPs) program continues to be operational and callers who have knowledge of illegal hunting and fishing activity could be eligible for rewards. The program provides an important avenue for citizens to report hunting and fishing law violations, and in the process, prevent the loss of wildlife that can result from illegal actions.

“In the annual reporting period from July 1, 2014, through June 30, 2015, the TIPs program resulted in 126 arrests of wildlife law violators,” GFP law program administrator Andy Alban said. “Wildlife would have been lost and violators would have gone unpunished if citizens had not been proactive by calling the TIPs hotline and reporting violations they had observed.”

During the past year, the TIPs program reported 213 investigations initiated through citizen reports, leading to 126 arrests, $18,558 in fines and $30,100 in civil penalties.

Callers can remain anonymous, and are eligible for rewards in cases that lead to an arrest. Rewards may range up to $300 for big game and $100 for small game or fishing violations. Higher rewards may be offered in extreme cases. Last year over $5,000 in rewards were paid.

“The TIPs program has been going since 1984, and in that time citizens have generated over 10,000 investigations that have led to 3,700 arrests,” Alban said. “We are grateful to the men and women who have cared enough about South Dakota’s wildlife to report illegal activity. Each and every individual is a vital part of the work to preserve our natural resources.”

Individuals may call the TIPs hotline at 1.888.OVERBAG (683-7224) to report violations, or report via the TIPs website at tips.sd.gov.

Now that most of our hunting seasons are open in SD please remember to Turn In Poachers 1-888-OVERBAG (1-888-683-7224)

Please Like and Share to help protect South Dakota’s wildlife resources!
11 PHEASANT SEASON REMINDERS

PIERRE, S.D. - Pheasant season brings family and friends together for exciting and fun memories, and the South Dakota Game Fish and Parks Department offers some reminders to make sure all hunters have safe and legal outings.

1. The daily limit for pheasants is three, with a possession limit of 15; however, a hunter cannot possess 15 pheasants until after the fifth day of the season.

2. It is illegal to allow a firearm to protrude from a motor vehicle or conveyance attached to it while on a public highway during the hunting season. This includes hunters riding to and from fields in the back of pickups.

3. It is illegal to shoot from a motor vehicle, including an ATV while hunting pheasants. This also includes hunters riding in the back of pickups to and from fields.

4. When riding in an ATV, firearms must be completely enclosed in cases and unloaded. Landowners on their own land and those who have concealed pistol permits and carrying pistols are exempt from this provision.

5. It is illegal to shoot pheasants and other small game from ATVs, except for properly permitted disabled hunters.

6. When small-game animals, such as pheasants, are lawfully shot from road rights-of-way and fall onto private land, those animals may be retrieved by unarmed hunters.

7. Don’t forget your license. While hunting, you must be in possession of your hunting license; those 16 and older must also have a valid form of identification for the purpose of verifying identity.

8. The use of nontoxic shot for small game is required on most public lands, but not all. Non-toxic is not required on U.S. Forest Service National Grasslands, state school lands or on most GFP-managed and leased properties designated at Walk-In Areas when hunting small game, such as pheasants or grouse.

9. Respect the land, landowners and people in your hunting group.

10. Safety and enjoyment of friends and the outdoors leads to a successful hunt.

11. Share your memories with us at #SDintheField.

ROAD HUNTING REMINDERS

SD GFP REMINDS HUNTERS THAT SOME CREP AREAS MAY BE HAYED

PIERRE, S.D. - South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) reminds hunters about several road-hunting laws:

1. No person may hunt a road right-of-way within 660 feet of schools, churches, occupied dwellings and livestock. Neither the person discharging the firearm nor the small-game animal being shot at may be within the 660-foot safety zone.

2. While hunting a highway or public right-of-way, hunters may shoot small game (except doves) and waterfowl that take flight or originate from a public right-of-way or highway. The hunter must be within the right-of-way and the game must have taken flight from within or be flying over the right-of-way. The public right-of-way along a section line or other highway is open for hunting if the right-of-way has been commonly used by the public for vehicular travel, as demonstrated by the existence of a well-worn trail or an intentional alteration or adaptation has been made to the right-of-way to enhance the natural terrain’s utility for vehicular travel or to permit vehicular travel where it was not possible before. Remember that fences are not always on a right-of-way boundary or sometimes there is no fence. Most section line rights-of-way are 66 feet wide.

3. People must park or stop their vehicles as far to the right-hand side of the road as possible.

4. If the person who discharges a firearm is more than 50 yards from the vehicle, the doors on the side of the vehicle nearest to the roadway must be closed, but the engine may remain running.

5. If the person who discharges the firearm is less than 50 yards from a vehicle, all of the doors of the vehicle must be closed and the engine must be turned off.

6. It is NOT legal to shoot small game and waterfowl that take flight from a public right-of-way over a Federal Refuge or Indian Tribal Trust Land. If a state-licensed hunter shoots at a bird across the fence of either of those lands, the hunter may be subject to arrest by a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service officer.

7. No person may discharge a firearm, muzzleloader, crossbow, or bow and arrow in the right-of-way of a public highway. Turkeys may be taken with a shotgun using shotshells or with a bow and arrow within the right-of-way.

8. A person may not discharge a firearm or other weapon across from any Black Hills National Forest system road.

9. Any person while hunting a road right-of-way who negligently endangers another person or puts that person in fear of imminent serious bodily harm is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.

10. When in doubt, don’t shoot.

SD Wildlife Federation Donors

The Legacy Council consists of five different donation levels. These donation levels were revised October 2011 to: Level V Eagle - $10,000 & above; Level IV Buffalo - $5000-9999; Level II Elk - $1,000 - $5,000; Level II Deer - $301 - $1,000; and Level I Pheasant - $100 – $300.

July 2015
LEVEL I PHEASANT
- FREASE, MARK - SD
- HEDLAND, ROGER - NE
- KEEFER, RICKY - SD
- KNOX, CAROL - SD
- JOHNSON, DONALD - CO
- KURTENBAUGH, ALFRED - SD

LEVEL II DEER
- LUND, ROBERT - MN
- MESTRESE, JIM - SD
- NOLL, RICHARD - SD
- PARKER, JAMES - SD

LEVEL III ELK
- BOETEL, BENNIE - SD
- LEVEL IV BUFFALO
- BAGAUS, TERRY - MN
- BLAND, STEVE - SD
- CHAPPS, RON - SD
- GOEDE, DAN - SD
- JENSEN, GARY - SD
- KASISCHKE, CARL - MI
- KREIDLER, JOHN - SD
- LEE, JOHN - SD
- LIBERT, TROY - SD
- MURPHY, STAN - SD
- SMITH, JOE - SD
- WILSON, JAMES - SD

Level V Eagle
- AYERS, JIM - SD
- BARKER, KENNETH - SD
- EISENBEISZ, DAVID - SD
- EVANS, RALPH - FL
- HALLSTROM, KEN - SD
- KUCK, MICHAEL - SD
- LIPPINCOTT, ROB - TX
- MEDEIROS, PAUL - CA
- PARCEL, KERRY - SD
- SPELLMAN, RON - CA
- WILSON, JAMES - SD

May 2015
LEVEL I PHEASANT
- LEPP, DONALD - SD
- TASNIAK, BILL - SD

LEVEL II DEER
- BARKER, KENNETH - CA
- KREIDLER, JOHN - SD
- LIBERT, TROY - SD
- MURPHY, STAN - SD
- SMITH, JOE - SD
- WILSON, JAMES - SD

LEVEL III ELK
- BOETEL, BENNIE - SD
- LEVEL IV BUFFALO
- BAGAUS, TERRY - MN
- BLAND, STEVE - SD
- CHAPPS, RON - SD
- GOEDE, DAN - SD
- JENSEN, GARY - SD
- KASISCHKE, CARL - MI
- KREIDLER, JOHN - SD
- LEE, JOHN - SD
- LIBERT, TROY - SD
- MURPHY, STAN - SD
- SMITH, JOE - SD
- WILSON, JAMES - SD

Level V Eagle
- AYERS, JIM - SD
- BARKER, KENNETH - SD
- EISENBEISZ, DAVID - SD
- EVANS, RALPH - FL
- HALLSTROM, KEN - SD
- KUCK, MICHAEL - SD
- LIPPINCOTT, ROB - TX
- MEDEIROS, PAUL - CA
- PARCEL, KERRY - SD
- SPELLMAN, RON - CA
- WILSON, JAMES - SD

At the 2003 Winter Board Meeting, the SDWF Board created the SDWF Wildlife Legacy Council. The Council was created to allow recognition of the people who support SDWF above and beyond their membership and raffle donations. Thank you to the following donors for their contributions to the SDWF. Please consider becoming a member of the Wildlife Legacy Council. SDWF is a 501(c)3 non-profit, all donations are tax deductible. These tax-deductible contributions will speak volumes for the future of the SDWF’s Wildlife Legacy Council! Please consider your donation today.

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Love the outdoors and need a tax deduction this year? If you have a car, van, truck, ATV, or boat that’s in reasonably good shape and you aren’t using, donate it to the SDWF. You’ll get a nice tax break and will feel great knowing you helped our great organization protect South Dakota’s outdoors.

SDWF Membership Application

To continue our conservation efforts - we need your help! Please donate generously.

Name: 
Address: 
City: 
State: 
Zip: 
Phone: 
e-mail: 
SDWF $20/Yr Membership Fee $ 
SDWF Camo-Coalition lobbying donation: $ 
Send Donation and Membership Application to: 
SDWF PO Box 7075 
Pierre, SD 57501-0952 

☐ Check - make checks payable to SDWF
A state judge on Wednesday invalidated core provisions of a 2010 law that largely blocked anglers and other members of the recreating public from streams flowing over private ground. HB141, “unfittingly” titled the Public Waters Access Act, violates Article XX of the Utah Constitution, which requires public lands — including the public’s easement to use rivers and streams — to be “held in trust for the people of the state,” 4th District Judge Derek Pullan ruled.

“Every parcel of public land, every reach of public water, is unique. If Wasatch, Kodachrome Basin, and Snow Canyon State Parks were disposed of for reasons unrelated to their acquisition, the public’s right to recreate in other places would be of little consolation,” the judge wrote in a ruling that concludes five years of litigation in his Heber City and Provo courtrooms. “That individual citizens must bear the initial expense of the litigation adds insult to constitutional injury.”

The law closed 2,700 miles of fishable streams, even though many of those miles had benefited from habitat and stream bank restoration, flood abatement and other publicly funded projects, according to the Utah Stream Access Coalition, whose members pushed the legal challenge. “This is a case where policy triumphed over profits; where law prevailed over lobbying,” said the group’s president, Kris Olson. “The rivers and streams of our state are gifts of providence, and the lifeblood of this arid land. Since before statehood, these rivers have been used by all, and we’re grateful the court prevented that use from becoming exclusive to a privileged few.”

The state is expected to appeal, but in the meantime, Wednesday’s ruling enjoins the state from enforcing the law. “We are carefully reviewing the over-60-page decision to determine what, if any, next steps will be taken by our office,” said Camille Anderson, spokeswoman for the Utah Attorney General’s Office.

Olson believes the ruling allows anglers to walk along streams as long they remain below the “ordinary” high water line. “The state needs to come out and say what the limits of the easement are. How far up the stream banks does it go?” Olson said.

Rep. Kay McIff, R-Richfield, introduced HB141 in response to a Utah Supreme Court ruling that affirmed the public’s right to touch beds of rivers that flow across private land. Intended to quell tensions between property owners and anglers, the law allowed only incidental contact with private river beds for purposes of safety and getting around obstructions.

Anglers and recreational boaters quickly mounted legal attacks targeting Utah’s two most cherished cold-water fisheries: the Weber and the Provo rivers, teeming with trout and winding through scenic valleys near Utah’s population center. But much of their mileage flows over private land, and HB141 wound up concentrating fishing pressure on the remaining reaches with public access, according to testimony Pullan fielded during six days of trial last summer.

“Boaters should be able to go down that river irrespective of bed ownership, and not have to worry about whether the river has sufficient width, depth and flow, not worry about [whether] getting out of the boat and touching the bed is required for safety,” attorney Craig Coburn said in the coalition’s closing argument. Lawyers for the state and a private landowner said HB141 does not “dispose” of the public’s easement to use rivers and streams, but merely regulates it.

“It gives rights, it is not solely limiting,” argued Nathan Thomas, a lawyer for Victory Ranch. “A restriction in use is not caused inherently by the act. It’s caused by the landowners who seek to avail themselves of the ability to exclude people from private property.” But coalition members, most of them northern Utah fly-fishers, testified that, subsequent to HB141’s enactment, pressure has become extreme on blue-ribbon stretches of the Provo River. The law increased Utah’s ratio of licensed anglers per accessible stream mile from 60 per mile to 105 per mile. By comparison, Montana’s ratio is only 13 anglers per mile, and Idaho’s 17.

“Utah rivers and streams are generally shorter and narrower, and therefore have reduced carrying capacity for recreational use,” Pullan wrote. “The infusion of more than 230,000 people onto the 43 percent fewer miles of river and stream constitutes substantial impairment to the public’s interest in the lands and waters remaining.”

Our livelihood is intimately tied to the food we eat, water we drink and places where we recreate. That’s why we have to promote responsibility and conservation when it comes to our natural resources.

Mark Udall
PIERRE, S.D. - The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Commission voted to change several daily and length limits for the upcoming 2016 fishing season. Changes include:

1. Decreasing white bass limits to 15 daily and 30 in possession on Nebraska border waters and from Fort Randall Dam down to the South Dakota-Nebraska state line on the Missouri River, to match those of Nebraska.
2. Removing the restriction allowing only largemouth and smallmouth bass less than 14 inches in length or 18 inches or greater in length to be harvested from Lake Cochrane in Deuel County and Waubay Lake in Day County.
3. Removing the 15 inch minimum length restriction exemption in July and August for walleye from Ft. Randall Dam down to the South Dakota-Nebraska state line on the Missouri River.
4. Removing the 15 inch minimum length restriction for walleye from the Cattail/Kettle Lake Complex in Marshall County and Bitter Lake in Day County.
5. Adding a 15 inch minimum length restriction for largemouth and smallmouth bass in Bismarck Lake, Custer County.
6. Changing the name of the “Black Hills Trout Management Area” to the “Black Hills Fish Management Area.”

The Return of a Western Icon

Wild Bison Return to the Colorado Prairie

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There was a big party on the rolling prairie of northern Colorado, and the only thing the guests of honor wanted to do was gallop away.

The roughly 200 celebrants were thrilled watching as 10 bison were introduced to their new home – a thousand acres of open space north of Fort Collins. The release on Nov. 1, National Bison Day, marked the first time wild bison have thundered across the Colorado prairie in about 150 years.

“The restoration of bison to the Soapstone Prairie Natural Area is another important step forward in the conservation of the species,” says Garrit Voggesser, the National Wildlife Federation’s national director of tribal partnerships.

The National Wildlife Federation has worked for more than two decades to restore wild bison to public and tribal lands. In March 2012, along with our tribal partners, NWF succeeded in getting 61 Yellowstone bison transferred to the Fort Peck Reservation. The next fall, 34 of those Yellowstone bison were transferred to the Fort Belknap Reservation in Montana. Then, in November 2014, an additional 134 genetically pure Yellowstone bison were restored to Fort Peck. NWF also worked with the Crane Trust in Nebraska to restore over 60, genetically-pure Yellowstone buffalo to Trust lands in February 2015.

The recent release on open space owned by the city of Fort Collins and Larimer County follows research by Colorado State University into preserving the genetically pure bloodlines of Yellowstone bison while eliminating the threat of disease. The bison in Yellowstone National Park don’t have cattle genes found in most other bison but they do have brucellosis, a disease that can cause pregnant females to abort.

There has never been a documented case of bison spreading brucellosis to livestock but the threat has prompted the policy of killing bison that wander out of Yellowstone.

Any Yellowstone bison relocated to tribal or public lands would have to be quarantined for up to two years.

The Return of a Western Icon

Now, Colorado State University researchers believe they’ve found a way to rebuild populations of genetically pure, disease-free bison. The 10 bison roaming in northern Colorado include the offspring of Yellowstone bison whose embryos and semen were rid of brucellosis bacteria before artificial insemination and embryo transfer.

The long-term goal is to have hundreds of the animals roaming about 10,000 acres of prairie – and to build a herd of genetically pure, disease-free bison that can be a foundation for more herds in the West.

The day of the bison’s release, everyone was focused on the immediate: celebrating the return of a big part of the Western landscape that’s been missing for far too long.

The National Wildlife Federation and partners have worked with tribes on the Fort Peck and Fort Belknap reservations in Montana to transfer Yellowstone basin to tribal lands and to get wild bison on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming.

Preserving and perpetuating the genetics of the Yellowstone bison is crucial to rebuilding wild bison populations. The Yellowstone herd is the link to an era when as many as 30 million bison wandered in huge masses across North America. After over-hunting and westward settlement, only a few wild bison were left.

A.J. Not Afraid, secretary-elect of the Crow Nation, told The Denver Post that bison are a national animal, like the eagle. He said, “Their survival depends on these conservation programs. The tribes cannot do it alone.”

GFP COMMISSION FINALIZES FISH LENGTH LIMIT CHANGES

4. Removing the 15 inch minimum length restriction exemption in July and August for walleye from Ft. Randall Dam down to the South Dakota-Nebraska state line on the Missouri River.
5. Adding a 15 inch minimum length restriction for largemouth and smallmouth bass in Bismarck Lake, Custer County.
6. Changing the name of the “Black Hills Trout Management Area” to the “Black Hills Fish Management Area.”

7. Allowing the removal of fish eyes for use as bait while on the water and specifying that on waters where length limits are in effect, only gamefish must remain whole, with head, skin and fins attached.

The Commission did not adopt the proposal to remove the 15-inch minimum length limit and two fish daily limit for walleye on Opitz Lake.

The Commission also voted to expand opportunities for paddlefish anglers to allow the snagging of paddlefish on the Big Sioux River during the October paddlefish season below Gavin’s Point Dam. Currently, Iowa allows licensed anglers to snag paddlefish on the Big Sioux River from the Missouri River upstream to the Interstate 29 Bridge during the spring Iowa paddlefish season. This rule change would allow licensed South Dakota paddlefish anglers to snag paddlefish in the Big Sioux River from the Missouri River upstream to the Interstate 29 Bridge during the October South Dakota paddlefish season.

The Commission also voted to set the archery paddlefish season earlier in the summer to allow archers a better chance to harvest paddlefish on the Missouri River downstream from Gavin’s Point Dam. The season will be from June 1 through June 30. Regulation changes adopted by the Commission will go into effect on Jan. 1, 2016.

Additional Commission action included adoption of the proposal to consider white bass as rough fish for commercial fishing on waters and at amounts specified on individual commercial fishing contracts approved by the department.

Sportsmen/women- Want to help fund SDWF and the Youth Conservation Camp plus reduce your taxes this year? Donate stocks and land to the SDWF. You not only won’t have to pay taxes on those assets, you will pay less tax because of your generosity!