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IF PUBLIC LANDS GO UP FOR SALE, SO WILL AMERICA'S FRONTIER SPIRIT

by Brett Koenecke

Americans have long enjoyed the practical and romantic aspects of the West. The West has provided us with minerals, timber, energy and space to roam freely for generations. We have a wonderful asset in the West — our public lands — which are owned by the people of the United States and held in trust for us by the federal government. Anybody can go out there and recreate, for free, any time, and that is a good thing for all of us.



Our Black Hills National Forest could be in danger of being sold.

Congress previously recognized the value of the public lands, declaring that these lands would remain in public ownership in an act known as the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. The U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service and the Bureau of Land Management are each commissioned in FLPMA to allow a variety of uses on their managed lands. Most of the public land in the West is thus managed under a nonexclusive shared-use arrangement. Lands for grazing, mining and logging — or all three — typically remain open to the public for hiking, hunting and camping.

“Multiple use” is defined as “management of the public lands and their various resource values so that they are utilized in the combination that will best meet the present and future needs of the American people.” FLPMA addresses topics such as land use planning, land acquisition, fees and payments, administration of federal land, range management, and rights-of-way on federal land. Local communities are empowered to ask for transfers to accommodate growth patterns.

Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah, chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, has proposed significant changes to the manner in which public lands are sold. He seeks congressional action to bypass FLPMA and its requirements, instead claiming that the “housing crisis” can be eased if only the federal government will sell off millions of acres of public land to developers. That’s nonsense, and those proposals have drawn significant criticism for good reasons.

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lands are sold. He seeks congressional action to bypass FLPMA and its requirements, instead claiming that the “housing crisis” can be eased if only the federal government will sell off millions of acres of public land to developers. That’s nonsense, and those proposals have drawn significant criticism for good reasons.

Previous homestead acts have done much to foster

private land ownership in the U.S. Those effects are undeniably positive. But Sen. Lee’s proposal isn’t a homestead act, and it fails to take into account that the land in the West which is capable of human habitation has by and large already been claimed. There’s little water, even less infrastructure and where those shortfalls can be blunted, the cost of developing housing in those locations is significantly higher than in already settled areas. Think of the expense of drilling (and maintaining) a fresh water well for each home, along with the needs for electricity, telecommunications, solid and liquid waste, and you can easily determine that further developing wild land for housing results in costs that can’t be recovered.

Further, Sen. Lee’s proposals have not been subjected to hearings or formal input as he seeks to put them in the One Big Beautiful (budget reconciliation) Bill currently under consideration in Congress. While it’s true that the Senate parliamentarian ruled the Lee Amendment out of order with respect to that bill, Sen. Lee continues to push his proposal in the media, and in Congress. Senators Thune and Rounds have not declared their positions on his proposal to my knowledge. While maps show that South Dakota does not have any parcels for sale, Lee’s original proposal put parcels in the Wyoming Black Hills on the chopping block. Lee has since said he would alter the proposal to include only Bureau of Land Management land within 5 miles of a population center and exempt U.S. Forest Service lands altogether.

Americans need space to be free, and fortunately we have it still. We need wild spaces in America to allow for the continuation of the frontier spirit that made us who we are as a people.

LET SLEEPING WIVES LIE Bill Antonides

My wife, Lila, is not a waterfowl hunter. She used to be, and at one time greatly enjoyed getting outdoors on a crisp fall morning to watch me pack in 100 pounds of gear to some godforsaken swamp, set up decoys in water two inches deeper than my waders, and retrieve ducks she shot that fell only after reaching the outer limits of human vision.

Lila gradually lost her passion for these early-morning forays. Perhaps her fulltime job, our three children, and the added housework contributed to her loss of enthusiasm. For whatever reasons, she no longer responds well to her alarm clock going off in the middle of the night. Lila still hunts, but prefers a critter with hours more similar to her own. Pheasants can be found at any time of day, and deer hunting is every bit as good at dusk as it is at dawn. Most people don't have to wake up from a deep sleep to go on an afternoon hunt, although I admittedly sometimes doze off while watching "Days of Our Lives" or "Judge Judy."

I was not ready to give up my waterfowl hunting simply to catch a few more winks, so we gradually came to an agreement: I would go duck hunting, and Lila would not. Lila's only requests were that I not disturb her sleep and not make a mess. It seemed like a very reasonable solution to me.

My first hunt without Lila was with a couple of friends, young lads who could carry their fair share (all) of the equipment and set out the decoys while I laid somewhere warm and dry and studied the inside of my eyelids. To prepare for the hunt, I gathered all my gear and clothing—



The author's wife will occasionally go waterfowl hunting in the afternoon with one of the kids, but never before noon. Lila is shown here with our grandson Austin, hiding behind thin air, or perhaps just hoping a blind duck will fly by.

except a pair of heavy socks—in a pile in the living room and made a bed on the couch, all to avoid disturbing my wife when I left. I also set an alarm clock by the couch, plus a backup alarm for a half hour later on my cell phone, which was on the charger in our bedroom.

At 3:30 a.m. the alarm clock went off, and I instantly responded by slapping the snooze button every few minutes until Lila came out of the

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"Let us speak courteously, deal fairly, and keep ourselves armed and ready." Theodore Roosevelt, San Francisco, CA, May 13, 1903

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President,
Brad Johnson

“Man always kills the thing he loves, and so we the pioneers have killed our wilderness. Some say we had to. Be that as it may, I am glad I shall never be young without wild country to be young in. Of what avail are forty freedoms without a blank spot on the map?” From A Sand County Almanac by Aldo Leopold

President's Column *by Brad Johnson*

Our goal for the upcoming year is to build broader and more effective partnerships as we work to protect and enhance South Dakota's wildlife.

Major political campaigns for governor and Congress are ramping up quickly and it is important South Dakota's sportsmen and women make their voices and political influence heard.

Outdoor recreation is responsible for nearly \$2 billion in annual economic activity in South Dakota and is directly responsible for about 18,000 jobs, according to the U.S. Bureau of economic Analysis.

Historically, the South Dakota Wildlife Federation historically has focused on hunting and fishing issues. But really, we simply should be working on anything that has to do with the outdoors and wildlife.

According to our Game, Fish and Parks department wildlife-associated outdoor recreation is critical to our state's economy. This is from GF&P's website.

“Large numbers of hunters, anglers, and outdoor recreationists spend many days enjoying South Dakota's diverse outdoor recreation opportunities.

- Both residents and non-residents who visited state parks in 2022, fished, hunted, trapped, boated or viewed wildlife in South Dakota, recreated for a combined total of 7.9 million days.
- Participating in these activities typically involves spending money on travel, supplies, and equipment, making the annual amount of these expenditures a significant contributor to the state's economy.
- Collectively anglers, hunters, trappers, wildlife viewers, boaters, state park visitors, and snowmobilers spend \$1.4 billion in South Dakota annually in support of these activities.

The top three activities are hunting (\$681.1 million), fishing (\$531.7 million) and state park visitation (\$312.1 million).”

So as a Federation, how do we become more effective?

Here are steps we will or already have begun to take to broaden our coalition. We are in regular contact with our existing affiliates and are working with groups in Marshall County and Day County to start new affiliates as well as talking with the Black Hills Fly Fishers about possibly joining. We are working with interested parties in the Yankton area. We have partnered with South Dakota Lakes and Streams Association and have become part of the SD Grassland Coalition.

We expect to be active in the upcoming campaigns for governor and Congress, letting our future leaders know how important wildlife and conservation is to our state and country.

We are engaged with the National Wildlife Federation, the country's largest nonprofit conservation education and advocacy organization with more than 6 million members.

As a member of the NWF national board of directors I am engaged on the NWF's Great Plains, Farm Bill, Hunter/Angler, Water and Climate/Green Energy working groups.

We are working with federations in North Dakota, Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas and Missouri to explore joint opportunities to work on issues similar to the Great Plains corridor and Central Flyway.

As mentioned before, Sen. John Thune's powerful position as Senate Majority Leader places South Dakota at the center of national conservation issues.

So we must meet this moment and grow our affiliates, expand our coalitions and continue to be the state's most respected advocates for our great outdoors.

LOSING YOUR EDGE *BY BILL ANTONIDES*

The rich black soil is soft beneath my boots as I walk the fields where I learned to hunt so many years ago. The locations are the same, but the character of the land has changed. The places I hunted were tangled masses of weeds, shrubs, rushes and cattails. I readily admit most of these spots were near cropland; what game bird would forage for microscopic weed seeds when a plethora of fine cuisine was only a few wing beats away? Good food is necessary to every living thing, and the easier to procure, the better. Food sources sown by man are still there, even more than before, but the tracks left by wildlife are not. The only footprints are mine. I know I won't need the pocketful of shells nor the shotgun I am carrying. The edges are gone.

Edges are simply places on the landscape where two or more habitat types converge. Every predator learns to hunt the edges if it wants to eat that day, or in the case of human predators, have a chance to fill the game bag. Edges can be as simple as a strip of grass along a cornfield or road, or as diverse as the change in flora as a forest emerges from a prairie. Or



Road right-of-way edges (and even entire roads) may be lost to crops. Note the squirrel running from food to shelter.

perhaps it is the prairie that emerges from a forest? The actions of man can now control plant communities formerly determined by rainfall, wildfires and other natural forces.

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SDWF Executive Directors Column *by Dana R. Rogers*

Our SDWF message of South Dakota's wildlife, fisheries, water and habitat continues on as this digital issue comes out. Increasing our wildlife, fish, habitat and access #1 and resident South Dakotan opportunities over commercialization and tourism priorities #2.

Our annual meeting in May was held at the Izaak Walton League in Pierre and was a success with great conservationists in attendance from many affiliates. The directors voted at that meeting to reduce the number of printed newsletters. Two of our quarterly newsletters will now be online only and emailed while the other two will be printed and mailed. This will save us printing and mailing costs.

We said thanks and goodbye to longtime vice president Terry Mayes of Rapid City as he ended his tenure. Director Emmett Keyser of Brandon stepped up to take his Vice President slot and we greatly appreciate his dedication and service to the Federation. New Directors Maggie Lindsey of Pierre and Jayden Halsey of Aberdeen were also elected after stepping up to serve. Both Maggie and Jayden are longtime Youth Conservation Camp stalwarts and will bring some wonderful perspectives to our board of Directors. I thank you ladies for your past efforts and look forward to working together to achieve the SDWF agenda in the future.

Speaking of the Youth Conservation Camp, the counselors once again did a fantastic job putting on a wonderful experience for so many future conservationists at camp Bob Marshall outside Custer. Our camp leadership of Bob Schaeffer, Jayden Halsey, Kemari Blumhardt, Mike McKernan and so many others, held a week of education and great experiences for so many of our youth.

I, once again, had the amazing pleasure of spending the week with the great SDWF and GF&P instructors to witness the events myself. I continue to be amazed by the opportunities they provide.

Moving forward with the benefits this camp provides. I love the projects they completed on behalf of all SD sportsmen. Our campers put in work with the Black Hills Flyfishers to clean up Rapid Creek, do beaver depredation countermeasures by painting the bottoms of trees with sand laden paint as well as putting in beaver dam analogues east of Custer.

RMEF local chair Sam Salacia invited me to speak to a group of volunteers after they'd spent the same day on the same Black Hills property planting willows during their Habitat Project Day. Collaborative efforts by South Dakota grassroots sportsman organizations are a critical way forward to achieve our shared goals.

The Beadle County Sportsmen club invited me in early June and I was honored to attend. The Huron club is a fantastic group of sportsmen concerned about our future. They asked great questions about past legislative issues as well as GF&P topics. They have a wonderful new gun range going in by Ravine Lake in their shared area with the local Izaak Walton league that will certainly be a wonderful venue once completed.

The Custer State Park Stakeholders Group and the Elk Stakeholders Group also recently met out here in the Black Hills. I'd previously committed to trying to help organize a new affiliate in Day County in Webster, so I was not personally able to attend those meetings. I asked Director Jeff Olson to represent the SDWF and Sean Fulton for the CSP meeting.

Reports back indicate that we still have work to do to lobby to increase the elk numbers in both the Black Hills and in Custer State Park. We know that the habitat will absolutely hold far more elk given the biological carrying capacity of both areas.

Tourism seems to be prioritized with viewing animals as a priority in the park. Bison are far more 'viewable' than actual wild ungulates like elk. While cattlemen's interests continue to be held higher than the wishes of the majority of sportsmen and citizens in the Black Hills.

The good news we heard was that commissioners in attendance were not at all enthused with the continued financial incentives offered to Black Hills landowners who continue to claim depredation. Mitigation opportunities offered



by the department and RMEF programs are always available, as are allowing access to sportsmen to help curb problem animals.

I'd personally like to see the Landowner Preference changed to Landowner on own land permits. Allow habitat heroes to keep their any elk permits, while providing cow licenses to those that continue to always seem to have depredation issues. South Dakota's Black Hills can absolutely hold far more than 8,000 elk! Unfortunately, the happy medium certainly escapes all the varied interests' groups.

Director Cody Warner did a yeoman's job in setting up a meeting of Webster sportsmen in hopes of getting a Day County affiliate up and running. We met with a local waterfowl outfitter prior to the meeting at the Izaak Walton club and it was great productive dialogue.

The local outfitter and SDWF Directors had many common goals. We discussed last years Outfitter and Guide Bill as well as a possible way ahead to achieve common goals. We agreed that legislation for things like Waterfowl Outfitting, Fishing Guides and Snow Bears were likely, far less apt to draw opposition. Open communication like this to find common ground is a wonderful thing in my opinion. We look forward to working with more operators in the future to protect South Dakota's public trust resources, while still allowing the opportunity for resident private landowners to operate.

The evening's meeting with local sportsmen in Webster was also productive. I was happy to be joined by President Brad Johnson, Directors Cody Warner, Chuck Dieter, Emmett Keyser, Larry Lewis and Jayden Halsey. Attendance by these fine Directors is to be commended. We were there to listen to concerns, champion the goals, mission and values of the SDWF and swell our ranks to achieve all common goals.

Great questions about aquatic invasive species, outfitters and guide issues as well as what the SDWF can do in cooperation with local groups. We appreciated all in attendance and hope to see a Day County affiliate rise up soon.

Another fantastic example of sportsmen and conservationists coming together to make a difference was the most recent removal of both the House and Senates misguided attempts to sell public lands. Regardless of political leanings, those that recreate, hunt, fish, hike, camp and explore our public lands did NOT want those amendments to succeed!

Sportsmen from dozens of NGO groups across America came together to let legislators know we did not agree with the amendments as written. I was blessed to be part of another meeting recently put on by the Norbeck Society in Rapid City at Cabela's. There, varied groups such as the SDWF, NWTF, BHA, PF as well as many non-hook and bullet groups all came together to brainstorm ways to protect our great South Dakota public lands.

As always, many issues of concern continue to be at the forefront of our efforts. Keep working to champion our wildlife, habitat and sportsmen access issues. Respect the Land, Respect the Landowners and Respect the Wildlife!

MEMORIES OF A DUCK HUNTER

BY BRAD JOHNSON - SD WILDLIFE FEDERATION PRESIDENT, MAY 15, 2025

Editor's Note: Brad originally authored this article in 1989 when he was 30 years old and his father was 56. Brad was a staff writer for the Colorado Springs Gazette Telegraph at the time. Brad's dad Barry passed away June 1, 2024, at age 91.

The thought struck me suddenly as I lay there in the damp, long grass waiting for sunrise.

It was loud and clear, like a shotgun blast.

As a young boy and teenager, I believed the sign of a good duck hunter was the number of ducks he bagged. Not long ago, that meant 10 birds, if you were selective and used the 100-point system properly.

A good hunter would add a goose or two, plus a limit of pheasants to a day's work.

The neighbors would visit in the evening while the birds were being cleaned in the garage and marvel at our success.

As a youth growing up in South Dakota, it was important for me to feel like an accomplished hunter.

Perhaps it was the stories I heard about my great uncle Martin and my grandfather Howard. They were the best duck hunters in our family, and arguably in the Upper Midwest, in my uneducated opinion.

Martin was the first Johnson duck hunter around the turn of the century. His hunting grounds were the marshes at Heron Lake, MN, a lake once famous for its unsurpassed Canvasback hunting.

I'll never forget Grandpa Howard telling stories about his oldest brother. Martin was a railroad engineer who often brought the hunters from Minneapolis and Chicago on his train to fill up the many duck camps at Heron Lake.

There was the day Martin and his best friend Hiney Winkler has a shooting contest on the season's last day. This was to settle the argument about who was the best hunter.

Grandpa said Hiney came back to shore first and laid out 98 ducks, certain he had won. Martin arrived a little later with 105 ducks.

My duck hunting began like many young boys. From the time I was old enough for my dad to carry on his shoulders into the marsh, I was along for the hunt.

I soon turned 12 and my first real hunt was on. It was an early season teal hunt and I think I went through 100 shells trying to hit those flying missiles. My black and blue shoulder was etched in my memory forever.

As the years passed, and the duck population dwindled because of disappearing habitat, my priorities changed.

This past year was like many others as I began my annual pilgrimage from my Colorado home to my native South Dakota for 10 days of hunting.

Unlike many areas, the waterfowl population has remained strong in South Dakota. Thanks to an extremely successful reintroduction program by the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department, the Giant Canada Goose population has skyrocketed.

Our mission this year was to hunt the big geese. Ducks were secondary, and pheasants would keep us busy in the afternoon. As we crawled in darkness into the low-lying grass on a peninsula on the marsh where we hunt near Watertown, I listened to the musical sound of what seemed like 1,000 geese nearby.

It would be some time before they flew out to feed so we settled into the grass to wait for sunrise and the eventual morning flight.

The sun climbed slowly toward the horizon, casting its dull orange on the bottoms of the few low-lying clouds. There was absolutely no wind, as dawn began to break.

The silent water, only yards away, looked like a mirror with only the slightest ripple marring the smooth surface.

About 800 yards to the left were 700 Giant Canada geese. To the right there were 300 more.

As the sun's bright glow glinted off a distant farmyard, the geese began to awaken. The honk, honk, honk of a few early risers soon turned into a restless chatter that picked up in intensity as they considered a morning flight.

I looked over my shoulder to see my father, Barry, sitting about 100 yards away, looking, listening and reflection as I was. Smoke from his pipe drifted slowly upward mingling with the crisp, clean air.

Overhead, a few ducks began to fly. Some in easy shooting range, while others flew high in the clear air. Far above, flocks of migrating mallards could be seen, and the noisy chatter of distant flying snow geese reminded me again of what I love about fall migration.

I was at peace with the world at that moment. I didn't care whether I fired a shell.

This is what my father really had taught me, much as his father had taught him. It doesn't matter how many birds you get, or if you get skunked. What matters is enjoying nature at its finest hour and enjoying the people who share that experience with you.

Listening to the world come alive on that silent body of water was all the reward I needed for a day's hunt.

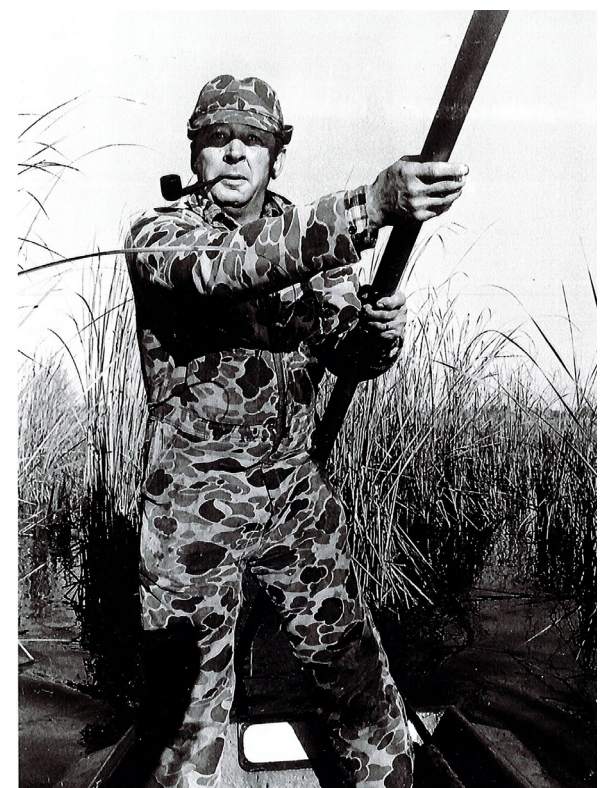
Soon, the sun peeked above the horizon, creating a marvelous backdrop as the dawn flight of ducks began. Time and again they flew by in easy gunning range. We let them pass, not wanting to disturb the geese.

Strange, I thought, I never would have passed on those easy shots in my younger years. Perhaps its maturity and realizing what is more important.

Here I was with my father watching the sunrise and listening to nature's symphony.

This is why my fall hunting trip home is so important in keeping me whole.

Being at one with nature with the people you love is far more important than how many birds are in the bag. If I never fire my gun again, well, I won't be disappointed as long as there are friends and plenty of places left for me to experience a real hunt.



SD TESTS FOR ‘FOREVER CHEMICALS’ IN RIVERS TO IDENTIFY, ADDRESS POTENTIAL CONTAMINATION

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - MAY 15, 2025



The Big Sioux River flows under a Highway 34 bridge near Egan in southeastern South Dakota. (Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

The Big Sioux River flows under a Highway 34 bridge near Egan in southeastern South Dakota. (Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

South Dakota’s state government is testing for “forever chemicals” in rivers across the state.

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) have been used in industry and consumer products since the 1940s, including in modern products such as nonstick cookware and water-resistant clothing, and don’t break down easily in the environment or in the human body. Research indicates PFAS exposure may be linked to negative

developmental and reproductive effects, and an increased risk of some cancers.

Concerns about their prevalence in the environment and their impacts on human health have grown steadily in recent years, as they’ve been discovered in drinking water, fish and food packaging.

The Biden administration set first-ever limits on the chemicals in last year. EPA-mandated testing has found them in nearly half of Americans’ drinking water.

Publicly available test results found a type of PFAS called perfluorooctane sulfonic acid at Mount Rushmore National Memo-

rial as well as smaller amounts of other PFAS contaminants in Aberdeen, Harrisburg, Rapid Valley Sanitary District, Lincoln County Rural Water System and the Mni Wiconi water system. The Trump administration is planning to weaken drinking water limits on PFAS, according to Politico

The state Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources began testing rivers this spring to “establish a baseline” for the presence of PFAS in surface waters across the state, according to Ben Koisti, spokesman for the department.

The department will use results to determine risks and help “identify and address potential contaminant sources,” Koisti said in an emailed statement. “The results can also be beneficial for water systems that use surface water as their water source,” Koisti said. “If PFAS contamination is identified in an area and at concentrations that pose a potential risk to a drinking water system, DANR will take action to further identify the source and mitigate the contamination to protect the impacted water supply.”

Testing is underway with additional sampling planned at the 30 testing sites this fall. Results will be posted on the department’s website. The East Dakota Water Development District tested 11 sites along the Big Sioux River in eastern South Dakota last year, finding the contaminants were most concentrated downstream of cities like Watertown and Sioux Falls in its preliminary data

The department’s sampling sites were selected based on geographic distribution, population density, and whether the surface water contributes to a drinking water supply. There are 26 water systems in the state that rely on surface water for drinking water.

The project costs about \$15,000 using federal EPA funds through the Public Water System Supervision grant.



A map shows PFAS testing sites managed by the state Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources. (Courtesy of SD DANR)

BLACK HILLS BEAVER TRAPPING MORATORIUM ADVANCES AS POPULATION TUMBLES

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - JUNE 5, 2025



A beaver at Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge in Wisconsin. (Larry Palmer/USFWS)

Citing a population decline and degraded habitat, South Dakota officials have advanced a plan to halt beaver trapping in the Black Hills for two years.

The plan will block trapping during the 2025 and 2026 seasons in the Black Hills Fire Protection District. Trapping would remain open in the rest of the state. The state legislature's Rules Review Committee will need to approve the moratorium.

In 2012, biologists saw 60 food caches — piles of woody vegetation built by beavers for winter — in the Black Hills. By 2023, they recorded only 16. Beavers occupied 52% of Black Hills watersheds in 2012, but just 23% in 2023.

Beavers once numbered in the thousands in the Black Hills and the millions nationwide, but their numbers began to decline with the onset of fur trapping by European settlers. Officials said habitat loss, not modern trapping, is to blame for current population declines. But they also said they don't want trapping to contribute to the problem.

"The limiting factor is habitat degradation," said John Kanta, section chief with the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks.

Only one beaver trapping was reported in the Black Hills last season.

Without beaver dams, faster-flowing water cuts stream channels too deep for beavers to work with. Cattle also trample streambanks, leaving fewer willow and aspen for beavers to feed on.

A closed trapping season will help protect the beavers that are being reintroduced, officials say. Game, Fish and Parks is working with the U.S. Forest Service and volunteer groups to restore habitat through tree planting and manmade dams, and nuisance beavers from urban areas are being relocated to the improved habitats.

"It's a wonderful step," said Hans Stephenson, owner of Dakota

Angler & Outfitter in Rapid City and a volunteer for the restoration efforts.

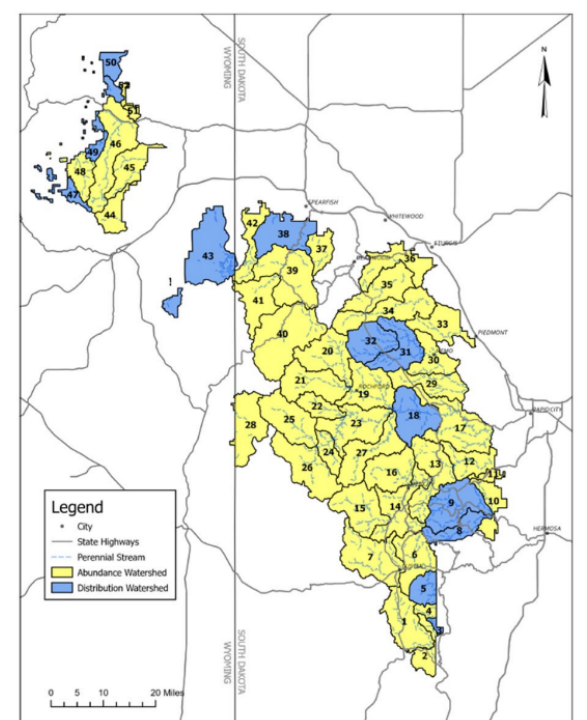
Beaver dams raise the water table, slow water flow, and create habitat that supports everything from aquatic insects to the brown and rainbow trout favored by anglers, Stephenson said.

Alex Solem, senior wildlife biologist with Game, Fish and Parks, emphasized the broader ecological role beavers play.

"Any time there's beaver around, usually, it signals a really healthy ecosystem," Solem said.

If more Black Hills streams had beaver dams, he said, floodplain soils would hold more water, support grazing, mitigate flooding and lessen the dangers of drought and wildfires.

In addition to the moratorium, officials adopted a new threshold-based framework to guide future decisions. Under that framework, trapping season would reopen if beaver occupancy in monitored watersheds rose above 80%. Occupancy between 50% and 79% would open the door to resident-only, private-land trapping. Levels below 50%, like now, would trigger automatic closure.



A map shows watersheds where GFP officials have identified beavers. (Courtesy: GFP)

LET SLEEPING WIVES LIE

Continued from page 2

bedroom with my cell phone and asked me how to shut the darn thing off. Frankly, she seemed a little miffed. It is not my fault she doesn't know anything about modern technology, so I took care of it. I simply muffled the cell phone alarm by stuffing it under the couch cushions until I had a chance to have the young fellows I was hunting with shut it off. I put my house and car keys there, too, so I wouldn't forget my phone when I left.

I got up and dressed in my hunting clothes, except for my boots. It didn't make sense to clomp around the house waking up Lila before I was ready to leave, so I just put on a pair of slippers. I also decided it would be a good idea to pack a lunch as I had no idea when I would be back. Roast beef sandwiches with lettuce, cheese, butter and mayo sounded pretty tasty.

I opened the refrigerator and stared blankly for several minutes. We had everything needed to make my sandwiches except roast beef, lettuce, cheese, butter and mayo. I tried moving milk jugs, pickle jars, egg cartons and salad dressings from the fridge to the kitchen counter, but that didn't help; Lila had clearly hidden all the ingredients for roast beef sandwiches. My feet were starting to get chilled from the fridge door hanging open, so I cranked up the house thermostat about 30 degrees. I did this not just for me, but mainly so Lila wouldn't be cold in the morning. Her comfort is always the first thing I think about.

I gently shook Lila awake and asked her where we kept the makings for roast beef sandwiches. Apparently there are drawers in the refrigerator for various things like lettuce and cheese, and the door has storage areas for butter and mayo. However, it seems you have to roast some beef now and then if you want roast beef sandwiches later. She told me, and not very politely I might add, to find something else for lunch.

We did happen to have a partial loaf of bread under some unpaid bills and old newspapers on the kitchen table. Since the bread was a little stale and we were low on supplies, I decided to make peanut butter and jelly sandwiches with toast. I put two slices of bread into the toaster and went to watch an infomercial on television while the bread cooked. Within minutes, Lila came out and asked me to turn down the TV volume. She acted like it was my fault that a salesman was screaming about the wonders of a new food processor or vacuum cleaner or some other item essential to our existence. My wife didn't seem to care that people who buy things from TV infomercials are apparently all hearing impaired.

I returned to the kitchen and put two more slices of bread in the toaster. The first two slices were a little light, so I set the toaster to a darker setting and went back to watching a man on TV hollering about the wonders of a machine that could cook a turkey in 30 minutes flat. A few minutes later Lila came dragging out of the bedroom again and told me she could smell something burning. I told her it was a turkey on a TV infomercial and to go back to bed, which she did.

I knew I had precious little time to get out of the house before what I had told her sank in, so I had to move fast. I removed the charred bread from the toaster using a metal coat hanger and needle-nosed pliers. When I regained consciousness, I scraped the burnt toast crumbs off the counter top and onto the floor to hide the evidence, and put a sticky note on the toaster telling Lila one of the kids must have broken it.

I was able to make two more pieces of toast using Lila's clothes iron on the "cotton" setting, and a cutting board as an ironing board. I considered making a beef roast with the iron, but it did not seem like a good time for further experimentation. If I had the turkey roasting machine from

the infomercial, I could probably cook a roast in five minutes, so I made a mental note to order one, and another mental note to find out where we kept the uncooked beef roasts. I left the iron turned on in case Lila wanted toast in the morning. I am always thinking of ways to help the woman, even though she rarely shows any appreciation for my efforts.

I buttered the toast and applied globs of peanut butter and jelly, making sure the remaining butter in the dish was coated with peanut butter and jelly, and each jar had similar streaks of the other ingredients inside and out. This was simply to make it easier for Lila to get a good mix if she wanted a sandwich, too.

There were no sandwich baggies anywhere to be found right in front of my face, so I again gently awoke Lila to ask where she liked to put them. She muttered a location which was not at all ladylike, so I just emptied a Wal-Mart sack on the living room floor and used it instead of baggies.

It was time to get my boots on, but I realized my heavy socks were in the bedroom. I had to turn on the light and make a little noise to find them, which woke Lila up again. In my defense, there is no reason we can't keep an extra pair of socks in the silverware drawer for emergencies. It was her idea to keep them all in my clothes dresser. If we are ever forced from our bedroom by a tornado or flood or armed marauder on a cold night, it will be her fault if we desperately need a pair of heavy socks and can't get to them.

I was finally out the door and ready to get going, but my house and car keys were with my cell phone under the couch cushions. Our doorbell doesn't work, but I was able to wake Lila by pounding on the window of our bedroom. Once again, she unfairly blamed me for jolting her awake, even though it was not my idea to always lock the house and take the car keys out of the ignition. We exchanged a few harsh words, but I made up for it by calling her to apologize after I got down the road a few miles. She did not say anything, but I think I heard her sobbing before she slammed the phone down. Lila was no doubt feeling bad at how horribly she had treated me.

We had a great hunt and I took a nice nap in the sun while my buddies packed up the gear. I even managed to trade a peanut butter and jelly sandwich for a roast beef sandwich. It had butter and mayo but no cheese, and I gently admonished my young friend for not planning ahead. Young sportsmen need to learn the importance of preparation so the hunt goes smoothly, and I don't mind giving them a few tips if it helps me out.

When I got home, I noticed the cutting board had scorch marks on it, and the clothes iron, toaster, and much of the food I had so carefully set on the countertop were in the garbage can. Lila was busy scrubbing the kitchen; I guess she must have made quite a mess while I was gone. She was also sweating profusely, either from the work cleaning up her mess, or because she did not notice I had earlier turned up the thermostat 30 degrees for her comfort.

Lila seemed to be extremely grouchy for a woman who had a great night's sleep rather than getting up to go duck hunting. She even refused to clean my ducks or bring me a beer while I watched another infomercial on TV. Maybe it's just me, but I really think she needs to be on some type of medication.

Bill Antonides is a freelance writer and a wonderfully thoughtful husband. He can be reached by e-mail at billantonides@abe.midco.net

SOUTH DAKOTA YOUTH CONSERVATION CAMP INSPIRES THE NEXT GENERATION OF OUTDOOR ENTHUSIASTS

BY JAYDEN HALSEY



For over six decades, the South Dakota Wildlife Federation has proudly hosted its annual Youth Conservation Camp in the scenic Black Hills. Held during the first week of June, this longstanding tradition offers teenagers a unique chance to step away from screens and schedules and reconnect with the natural world. Campers engage in hands-on conservation work, outdoor recreation, and educational programs designed to build skills they can carry with them for life—and share with their families and communities.

This year, 77 teens from across the state took part in the camp, diving into everything from wildlife management and outdoor survival to archery, canoeing, and fishing. For many, it was their first time experiencing these activities, and the lessons learned went far beyond technique. Campers developed a deeper respect for nature, formed lasting friendships, and grew in confidence as they embraced new challenges and adventures.

Despite cooler temperatures and a bit more rain than usual, spirits remained high. The unpredictable weather didn't slow anyone down—it only added to the stories they'll tell and the memories they made.

The success of this year's camp wouldn't have been possible without the dedicated group of volunteers and staff who made it all happen. Their passion for conservation and commitment to youth development were on full display, and their efforts didn't go unnoticed.

While it may be hard to top the fun and impact of this year's experience, organizers are already planning ways to make next year even more memorable. With a strong foundation and an enthusiastic team behind it, the South Dakota Youth Conservation Camp is sure to continue inspiring future generations for many years to come.



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**Send this and \$30.00 to SDWF
PO Box 7075
Pierre, SD 57501**

SD WILDLIFE FEDERATION LEGACY DONORS FROM APRIL 2024 – JUNE 2025

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(c3) 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. Donations can be sent to SDWF, PO Box 7075, Pierre, SD 57501.

The Legacy Council consists of five different donation levels. These donation levels were revised October 2011 to: Level V Eagle \$1,000 & above; Level IV Buffalo \$401-\$999; Level III Elk \$301-\$400; Level II Deer \$201 - \$300; and Level I Pheasant \$100-\$200.

APRIL 2024 – JUNE 2025

LEVEL V EAGLE

SOUTH DAKOTA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
YANKTON AREA PHEASANTS FOREVER
BRAD JOHNSON - SD
BEADLE CO SPORTSMAN CLUB
BROOKINGS WILDLIFE FEDERATION
DAKOTA SPORTSMAN INC
SPORTSMAN'S CLUB OF BROWN CO
29-90 SPORTSMAN'S CLUB
BLACK HILLS SPORTSMEN
HAROLD MANSHEIM - SD

LEVEL IV BUFFALO

BLACK HILLS SPORTSMEN
EMMETT KEYSER - SD
WHETSTONE SPORTSMEN
CHUCK AND GINGER SCALET - KS
JEFF OLSON - SD
SE SD QUALITY DEER
EMMETT KEYSER - SD
JONES CO. SPORTSMEN
HECLA COMMUNITY SPORTSMEN
MARLING STAMMER - SD
HIGH PLAINS WILDLIFE ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL WILDLIFE ASSOCIATION

LEVEL III ELK

BIG SIOUX APPRAISALS
29/90 SPORTSMEN
STEVE BERBERICH - SD
JAMES FREDRIKSON - SD
LAKE CAMPBELL WILDLIFE

LEVEL II DEER

JONES COUNTY SPORTSMAN'S CLUB
NIK LIPP - SD
29/90 SPORTSMEN
JOHN PRANGER - SD
JERAULD CO FISH AND GAME
MIKE DOUGLAS - SD
HERBERT WISWALL - SD
JOHN COOPER - SD
RICHARD MILLER - SD
GERALD WICKSTROM - SD
HECLA COMMUNITY SPORTSMAN

LEVEL II DEER

ARLO LEVISEN - SD
SPORTSMEN CLUB OF BROWN CO
DON BARTHOLOMEW - AZ
DAN LIMMER - SD

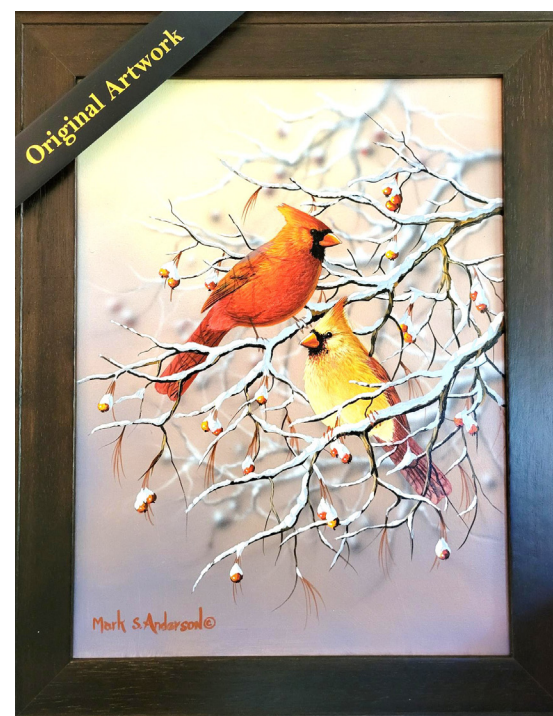
LEVEL I PHEASANT

CHUCK LEBEDA - SD
JIM LEMONDS - SD
FORREST FLINT - MN
LARRY KALLEMEYN - SD
APRIL 2024 – JUNE 2025

LEVEL I PHEASANT

TIM BJORK - SD
BARRY JOHNSON - SD
MYRON WACHENDORF MEMORIAL - SD
CAROL JOHNSON - SD
JOHN SIMPSON - SD
KENDALL BURNS - CO
LARRY MILLER - SD
SCOTT DOMKE - SD
SCOTT PICKER - WI
ANDREW O'CONNEL - MN
MICHAEL DOUGLAS - CA
HERB WISWALL - SD
DON LEPP - SD
DUSTY MILLER
JOHN COOPER - SD
HECLA SPORTSMEN CLUB
LAKE CAMPBELL SPORTSMEN
JAMES EIDSVOLD
LARRY HAMRE - SD
STEPHEN EGGER
ARLO LEVISEN - SD
GRADY JOLLEY - SD
MICHAEL ROMANS
SCOTT PICKER - WI
JEFF KETTER - WI
LARRY O'RILEY TRUST - MO
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LOSING YOUR EDGE

Continued from page 3

BY BILL ANTONIDES



Wetland “reclaimed” for cropland a little at a time. Photos by the author.

In my younger days, fence lines were everywhere. Good fences make good neighbors, but they also allow livestock to forage in cropland after the combines have finished their work. The cattle glean a few more bushels of grain and add genuine organic fertilizer for next year’s crops, while pastures are given a much-needed rest. Back then, fence lines had a few feet of grass before the cropland started. The grass allowed the farmer to drive his pickup around the field to check the crops, fix fence, or just because he wanted to.

As often as not, these grassy areas were choked with wild sunflowers and other native plants and shrubs. This fence line habitat provided nesting areas for birds and safe travel lanes and hiding and resting areas for all manner of wildlife. It also gave the cattle and other animals a selection of delicacies to browse upon when the grain was gone or covered by winter snows.

Most of the old fence lines are gone now, along with the edge habitat they provided. Today’s farmers cover more land and cover it faster with larger and better equipment. Fences are an impediment to modern farming operations. They also take up a few acres of farmland, and the small amount of grain left after highly-efficient combines do their work is hardly worth the time it takes to move cattle from field to field. If need be, an electric fence can be put up in far less time than it takes to fix an old barbed wire fence.

I suspect many fence stretchers, once an indispensable tool routinely found in every pickup in the countryside, now hang unused and forgotten in tool sheds. I can’t blame the farmer who tears out his old fences. As valuable as they can be to wildlife, they were never part of nature’s plan. I have enough scars from tightening the stretcher just one more click than the rusty wire could take to know the pain and frustrations of fixing fence.

In general, more diversity in the ecosystem is better for man and beast alike, as more needs—food, water, shelter and space, all in a suitable arrangement—are likely to be met. Wetlands are the essence of diversity in the prairie pothole region. Introduced grasses on the high ground—perhaps brome and Kentucky bluegrass—make way

for an abundance of wild and domesticated plants in the lower areas. Amongst this array of plants are bluestem, switchgrass and wild rye, followed by reed canary and prairie cordgrass as the elevation drops a few more inches. Sedges, bulrushes and cattails grow where the predators’ feet are always wet. Floating and submerged aquatic plants thrive in the waters of semi-permanent and permanent wetlands. Literally hundreds of species may make up the plant community in and around a wetland, and the transition between each family of plants is an edge.

To the proponents of drain tile and drainage ditches, wetlands are places where the water is several feet deep year-round, and anything else is just a mud hole. They are wrong. The low spots in the field that farmers shy away from in the spring lest they bury their tractor are wetlands. These temporary wetlands are critically important to waterfowl and a myriad of other wildlife species for a portion of their life. The “mud hole” wetlands are also valuable to downstream landowners, and to folks who do not like to be flooded out of their homes, and to people who do not like paying taxes to fix roads and bridges and cities flooded because of decisions made upstream.

We can’t control the weather, but flooding and pollution caused or worsened by drainage ditches or tiling are entirely manmade and preventable problems. The current philosophy seems to be that millions of dollars of soybeans and corn are far more valuable than billions of dollars of damages to wildlife habitat, homes, farms and infrastructure. Human lives lost, either directly or indirectly as a result of drainage, don’t even seem to enter the equation.

Perhaps in time we will understand the short-sightedness of such thinking. I foresee the day when we will have a new government agency whose sole purpose is to rid the country of drain tile and drainage ditches. The financial burden of doing so will fall on the shoulders of the taxpayers, as it is impossible to assign blame. The land one farmer, developer or homeowner drains means almost nothing in the big scheme of things. It is when hundreds and more join in the drainage spree, even just an acre or two at a time, that we have a serious problem. We now have thousands anxious to dry up their land before the government, meaning we the people, wakes up to the facts.

The edges I hunted so many years ago—fence lines, shelterbelts, wetlands, and perhaps a corner here and there the tractor couldn’t reach—are far fewer in number. Ninety percent of the wildlife is found in 10% of the habitat, and that 10% is rapidly disappearing. Yes, the rich, black soil is soft beneath my boots, and I am not fighting my way through a tangled mess of weeds, shrubs, rushes and cattails. But I’m also not hunting. I’m just out for a stroll with an unneeded pocketful of shells and shotgun in hand.

Bill Antonides is a retired SD conservation officer and a certified wildlife biologist. Comments can be sent to him by e-mail at billantonides@abe.midco.net

YOUTH IN THE OUTDOORS

“Brookings Wildlife Federation teamed up with members of the Beacon Hill Rifle and Pistol Club to offer youth a chance to safely experience different firearms/archery/and even hatchet throwing on June 7th. Our ongoing “Youth in the Outdoors” event is free to all youth and a great opportunity for parents wanting knowledgeable



volunteers to show their kids how to respectfully and responsibly use firearms. The goal is to get kids interested in the outdoors through hunting and/or target shooting for sport or just for fun!”

Rich Widman

OFFICER OATHS



These directors took the oath of office in their positions at the annual meeting in May. Left to right; new VP Emmett Keyser, new Directors Maggie Lindsey, and Jayden Halsey. President Brad Johnson and VP Ryan Roehr, VP George Vandel. We appreciate them stepping up to serve on the board of directors.



Fleet  Farm.



2025 CONSERVATIONISTS OF THE YEAR AND LEGISLATOR OF THE YEAR

JAYDEN HALSEY: YOUTH CONSERVATIONIST AWARD.



Jayden's introduction to the SDWF Youth Conservation camp was in 2010, as a 15-year-old camper. That first year of camp left an impression on her and she couldn't wait to go back!

It's an incredibly enriching experience for a young person. Every year she could, she came back to camp to try the other classes, to learn new skills, make even more new friends, and expand her connections with wildlife and conservation. Any way that she could learn to give back, as a "thank you" for the opportunity, was truly valuable to her.

She became a CIT (Counselor in Training). After her son was born in 2014, she returned in 2015 as a co-counselor through 2019 and even brought her husband to camp so he could be a counselor with her. He was a shoe-in for the job and the kids took to him right away.

In the spring of 2022, she was honored when she was asked to be an assistant director by Bob Schaeffer and Kemari Blumhardt. She is truly grateful to be their partner in crime and help continue the production of this camp for generations to come in hopes that we can enrich the lives of other South Dakota youth and make an impact by broadening their horizons.

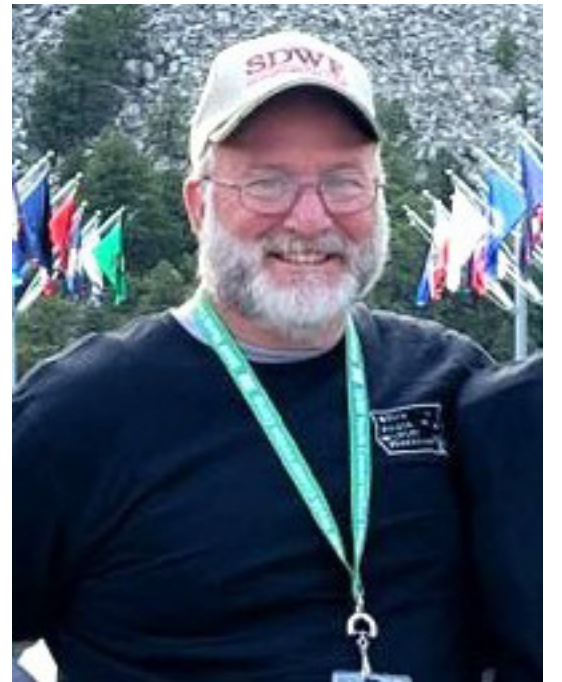
DEB SOHOLT: WATER CONSERVATION AWARD



Deb Soholt is a former South Dakota State Senator and great champion of our water resources. She has served on the SD Lakes and Streams Association board of directors and is spearheading a \$100,000 study with the University of South Dakota and Montana State on the economic impact of zebra mussels in our lakes and streams. Aquatic Invasive Species such as Zebra Mussels and plants like Curly Leaf Pondweed and fish like Asian Carp can dramatically change our water ecosystems. As a state senator Soholt worked to get state government to take the issue more seriously, and she continues that work today. Zebra mussels consume great amounts of microscopic organisms that are the food source for fry and minnows. They also concentrate mercury in mats of excrement on lake bottoms and a recent study by the University of Minnesota shows that they increase the mercury content in walleye and perch. They clean up the water creating an environment for pollutant rich water to grow massive amounts of native and invasive weeds like Curly Leaf Pondweed. Irrigation systems also are at risk. Deb is relentless in her work as a Water Conservationist and we appreciate all her hard work on behalf of our South Dakota wildlife, fisheries as well as our lakes and streams.

BOB SCHAEFFER: CONSERVATIONIST OF THE YEAR

Bob Schaeffer has been our South Dakota Wildlife Federation Youth Conservation Camp Director for many years. While growing up, his parents exposed him to the outdoors, camping and hunting. He graduated from Aberdeen Central in 1984. Bob served as a mechanic in the Army for 9 years before moving back to Aberdeen where he's worked for Butler Machinery and later at 3M. He's passed on that great love and respect for wildlife and the outdoors to his 4 daughters who have all attended the camp. A local friend, Dan Opp asked Bob to attend and become a counselor. Like many of the Youth Conservation Camp attendees and counselors, he got hooked. Because of his training in the medical field at work, he filled in as camp nurse for a couple years. After years of assisting Dan Opp and Mike McKernan, they asked him to take over as Director. It has been a pleasure to work with Bob as he truly has a servant's heart for these campers. His selfless effort to organize and put on the camp has directly been responsible for educating hundreds of our high school conservation students. Bob will be the first to tell you that it takes a lot of people to help put on a week-long camp. A very humble man, Bob relays he feels very honored and privileged to be a part of camp. It's become a huge part of his life.



REP ROGER DEGROOT: LEGISLATOR OF THE YEAR AWARD



D7 Legislator
Roger DeGroot

Roger DeGroot from Brookings, representing Legislative District 7 in the South Dakota House of Representatives, was an outstanding advocate for our natural resources during the 2025 Legislative session. The SD Wildlife Federation Board began working with Roger during the fall of 2024 to develop a draft guide and outfitter bill. Specifically, to create a law that would require professional guides and outfitters to be registered, licensed and held to minimal standards. Such actions, many of which would require public rule making by GFP Commission, included not having a hunting or fishing license revocation, require minimal record keeping, first aid training and liability insurance. Very similar regulations are currently required for licensed shooting preserves. Similar minimal guide and outfitter regulations are required in most states – South Dakota is an exception with no requirements, and no accountability for a business totally dependent on our public trust natural resources.

Roger was a great person to work with. He did what he said he would do. He listened to our suggestions and incorporated them in the final draft legislation. He coordinated with the SD Legislative Research Council staff, GFP staff, the House leadership and other legislators.

Despite the best efforts of Rep. DeGroot and the SD Wildlife Federation, the bill failed in Committee.

Throughout this process, Roger was open and honest with the SD Wildlife Federation. He was an excellent communicator, always keeping us informed. Despite knowing that his bill was going to die in Committee, Roger honored our request that the bill at least see committee action. That act took courage and fortitude.

For his actions well "above and beyond" involving the 2025 Legislative Session, Representative Roger DeGroot deserves our heartfelt thanks and formal recognition as recipient of the South Dakota Wildlife Federation Outstanding Legislator Award.

ONE BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL: THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY BY DAVE DITTLOFF

Few bills in Congress have created as much commotion as HR1 – the One Big Beautiful Bill as President Trump refers to it. After months of hubbub and negotiations the bill passed on July 4th. It contains a lot of publicized sections related to taxes, Medicaid, and so on. Most of its provisions related to conservation have gotten much less attention. Here are some of the highlights:

THE GOOD:

The Farm Bill: A couple of years ago Congress included a large infusion of funds to the Farm Bill Conservation Title as part of the Inflation Reduction Act. HR1 keeps a large portion of these funds directed to Farm Bill implementation. In doing so, the baseline funding for Farm Bill conservation programs will increase from \$6 billion per year to \$8 billion per year. As a result, on farms and ranches more habitat will be created, more soil will be protected, more water will be conserved, and more money will be paid to farmers and ranchers for doing good conservation on their lands.

Public lands sell-offs: Sometimes a bill is best known for what it does not include. For most of the time the Senate was discussing HR1, the bill included a provision that would have mandated selling off millions of acres of federal public lands—the same U.S Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management lands we hunt, fish, camp, and hike on. Sportsmen responded to this provision with vociferous opposition. With one voice just about every hunting and fishing organization campaigned against it. We sent the message that our public lands are a key part of our national heritage that shouldn't be put up for sale. Our opposition to the provision worked. During the last days of negotiation, it was removed from the bill.

THE BAD

Timber cutting: HR1 contains a provision requiring the U.S. Forest Service to increase timber production by at least 250 million board feet more than the previous year. The provision doesn't just say it has to offer that much timber for sale; it actually has to sell that much. Timber management isn't necessarily a bad thing. Many projects are sure to benefit habitat and reduce fire hazards. That being said, the language of the provision is problematic in numerous ways. For example, what if no company bids on a timber sale? Additionally, massive DOGE staffing

cuts in the U.S. Forest Service will make the administration of this mandate difficult to carry out in an efficient and scientific way.

Clean energy tax credits: HR1 ends tax credits for wind and solar developments by 2028. These tax credits were cornerstones of the country's strategy to address the changing climate. Fish, wildlife, and our natural world are already being impacted by climate change in a myriad of ways. If the worst of the impacts are to be avoided, America must take a leadership position on ways to reduce carbon emissions. Taking away clean energy tax credits is a step in the wrong direction.

THE UGLY

NEPA pay to play: The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires that federal agencies evaluate the potential environmental impacts of their proposed major actions, typically by preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) or more detailed Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). NEPA does not mandate policy outcomes. Rather, it mandates a 'look before you leap' approach to decision-making, so the full environmental effects of a project are understood before that action is taken. A provision in HR1 would expedite NEPA reviews if the project sponsor pays 125% of the anticipated costs of preparing the EA or EIS. The accelerated timeline for the reviews would be no more than 180 days for an EA or one year for an EIS. These expedited timelines combined with the recent DOGE staffing cuts at many of the agencies that conduct the EAs and EISs will undoubtedly result in less rigorous environmental reviews of potential projects and more environmental problems involving projects approved by federal agencies.

Oil and gas development: HR1 includes significant rollbacks involving oil and gas development on public lands. It rolls back the royalty rates charged to oil and gas companies operating on our public lands. The bill also reinstates noncompetitive leasing, which allows companies to secure public land leasing rights at low prices with minimal oversight. Not only are these rollbacks fiscally irresponsible, they will undoubtedly result in more spills, leaks, and habitat fragmentation on our public lands.

The Author is the Director of Conservation Partnerships - Northern Rockies and Prairies Regional Center

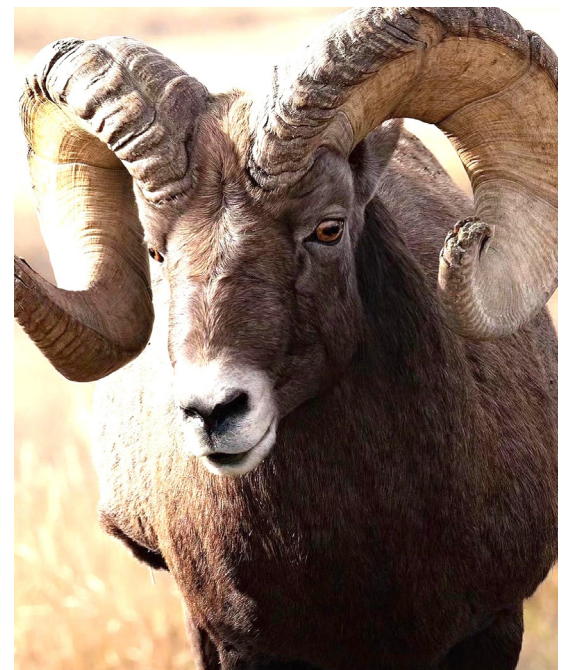
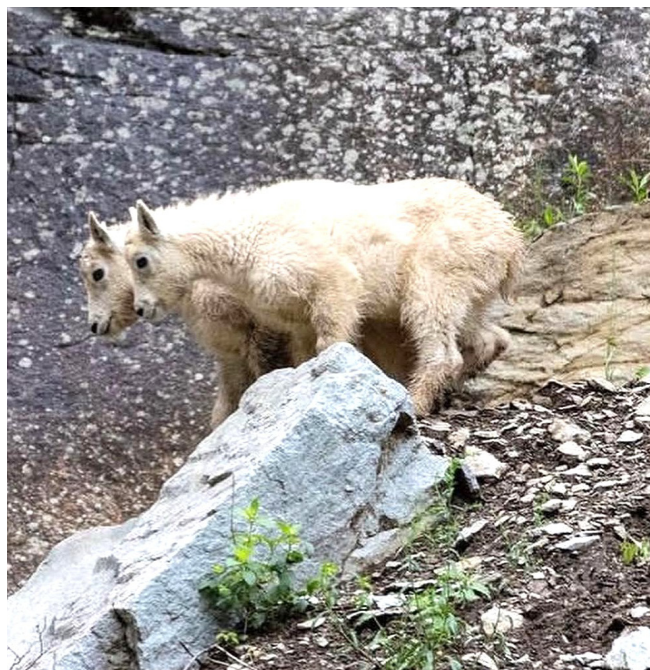


Photo Credit: SD In the Field

“A system of conservation based solely on economic self-interest is hopelessly lopsided. It tends to ignore, and thus eventually to eliminate, many elements in the land community that lack commercial value, but that are (as far as we know) essential to its healthy functioning. It assumes, falsely, I think, that the economic parts of the biotic clock will function without the uneconomic parts. It needs to relegate to government many functions eventually too large, too complex, or too widely dispersed to be performed by government.” From A Sand County Almanac by Aldo Leopold

NEW OUTDOOR ARCHERY RANGE OPENS AT THE SDGFP SIOUX FALLS OUTDOOR CAMPUS

By Emmett Keyser

In mid-March of this year, the SD Game, Fish and Parks Sioux Falls Outdoor Campus opened their new Outdoor Archery Range in Sertoma Park, located just south of 49th Street in south-central Sioux Falls. This new outdoor education space was designed and built to accommodate all archery shooters, from beginners to more experienced archers, but was built especially to help grow interest and participation in archery shooting sports and archery hunting.

The new range offers 12 lanes for shooters, with targets ranging from distances between 10 to 60 yards. The facility includes two accessible shooting lanes that offer concrete sidewalks to better enable access to targets by shooters of all abilities. Other range amenities include a covered shooting lane, table spaces for working on archery equipment and seating space for observers. There is also a target and equipment storage area directly attached to the facility.

The new outdoor archery range is an exciting new addition to the outdoor education facilities and opportunities offered at the Sioux Falls Outdoor Campus and will enable local archers from the Sioux Falls area and surrounding communities the chance to sight-in or tune-up their archery equipment. More importantly, it offers a great space for archery hunters to hone archery skills prior to the coming hunting seasons, says David Parker, Sioux Falls Outdoor Campus Director. According to Parker, the Outdoor Archery Range is just the first part of a larger expansion project going on at the existing Outdoor Campus building that will culminate with the addition of 3 new classrooms, an indoor archery and BB gun range, game processing facilities, and new amenities to existing classroom spaces that will enable Campus staff to better teach fish and game cooking classes at their current facility. The new fish and game processing facilities will also include a walk-in freezer space that will enable the Campus outdoor education staff to better facilitate what Parker calls 'field to fork classes'.

"These 'field to fork' classes provide new hunters of all ages a chance to learn how to properly handle and effectively shoot a firearm, how to track, spot and stalk wildlife, where to hunt for wildlife, how to seek landowner permission and will teach the novice hunters about wildlife habits and habitat, hunting tactics and ethics. And as part of the class, the students are actually taken into the field to harvest deer and wild turkeys", said Parker. "Then once the student harvests an animal, they are able to learn how to properly field dress and process the animal for cooking or storage in a freezer", he said.

The addition of the new Outdoor Archery Range is just the first part of a larger Sioux Falls Outdoor Campus Expansion Project that has been in the works for nearly 10 years. The expansion project came about through a major fundraising partnership between the SD Parks and Wildlife Foundation, the Friends of the Sioux Falls Outdoor Campus Committee and SD Game, Fish and Parks. According to Parker, the Outdoor Archery Range portion of the project cost \$587,000 and was constructed using a combination of private donor dollars made available through the James & Elouise Elmen Family Foundation, via a grant from the Easton Foundations and through matching federal grant-in-aid dollars made available to SD Game, Fish and Parks each year through the Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program. Pittman-Robertson Fund dollars are managed and annually distributed to state fish and wildlife agencies across the country by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Funds for this Program are generated through an 11% excise tax placed on sporting arms and ammunition and archery equipment.



Pittman-Robertson Program federal grant dollars to help complete both the outdoor archery range and the Campus building additions. GFP anticipates the total cost of the two projects will land somewhere between \$6 to \$7 million dollars.

Parker advised that as of July 1st, more than 5000 people have already used the new outdoor archery range since it first opened this spring. And while Parker anticipates the new facility will play an important role in many of the archery classes already taught at the Outdoor Campus, he said "We are especially excited about the chance for the Outdoor Campus to partner with local area archery businesses to host specific archery shooting events like 'bow tune-up days' and other archery shooting training classes and activities at our new facility."

Parker advised that users of the new outdoor archery facility should be advised of the following rules and stipulations that are in effect at the new archery range facility:

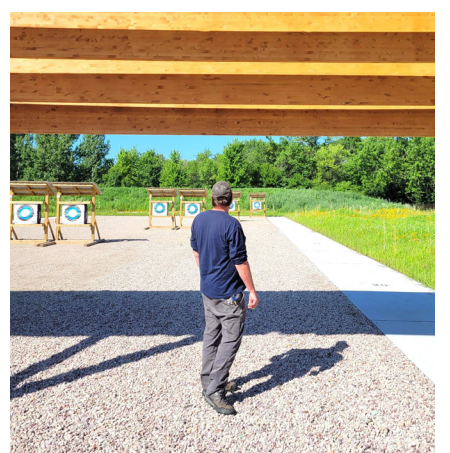
- ✓ Field or target points only (no broadheads).
- ✓ Practice proper safety at all times.
- ✓ Only shoot at designated targets within your lane and only from the firing line.
- ✓ Always draw bow with arrow parallel to the ground (no sky-drawing).
- ✓ Crossbows are only permitted on the two outside concrete lanes.

Shooters should also be advised that there is no range commander on site and participants assume all risk when using this new range.

The range is open during regular Sioux Falls City Park Hours (5:00 am - 10:00 pm daily).

For more information about the new outdoor archery range and other outdoor education facilities coming soon or to learn more about the outdoor education classes currently offered by the Outdoor Campus, please feel free to contact the Sioux Falls Outdoor Campus at 605.362.2777.

Author - Emmett Keyser is retired from SD Game, Fish and Parks and currently serves as a volunteer Board Member and Vice President of the SD Wildlife Federation and volunteer Board Member and Vice Chairman of the Friends of the Sioux Falls Outdoor Campus Committee



To help fund the Sioux Falls Outdoor Campus projects, SD Game, Fish and Parks challenged the SD Parks and Wildlife Foundation and the Sioux Falls Friends of the Outdoor Campus Committee to help raise \$3 million dollars in private donations that could be matched with

2025 South Dakota Wildlife Federation's
\$3000 Cash Raffle

\$15 each or 3 for \$35



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- ♦ One gun will be awarded for each 100 tickets sold.
- ♦ 21 guns will be awarded if 2,100 or more tickets are sold.
- ♦ SDWF reserves the right to offer a cash settlement or substitute a gun of equal or greater value.

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1 Cash Raffle Ticket @ \$15 Total \$ _____
3 Cash Raffle Tickets @ \$35..... Total \$ _____
21 Gun Giveaway Ticket @ \$25 ea..... Total \$ _____
6 Cash Raffle Tickets @ \$60..... Total \$ _____
6 Cash Raffle Tickets and 3 – 21 Gun Tickets @ \$125 Total \$ Total \$ _____
Grand Total..... Total \$ _____