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## The Dream-Maker Bull

By Emmett Keyser - January 1, 2026

We are all painfully aware that the number of chances a resident South Dakotan will get to hunt elk in the Black Hills is excruciatingly limited over your lifetime. Not only does drawing an any-elk tag require a high number of preference points, long-term applicants for any-elk tags also must contend with an ever-increasing number of any-elk applicants year after year. While my friends at SD Game, Fish and Parks continue to do their best, they can still only manage an annual Black Hills elk population of somewhere around 7,000 to 7,500 elk within the limited geographic area the size of the Black Hills. And given other

competing interests who also utilize the various natural resources of the Black Hills, resident elk hunters are not likely to see the number of any-elk tags issued grow appreciably in the coming years. Nonetheless, I believe the Game, Fish and Parks staff and Commission will continue to look for ways they might tweak or improve the overall fairness in allocation of elk tags despite some of these underlying hard truths.

That said, this past summer was my son Matt's 'lucky year' and he would finally get his first chance at a SD bull elk during the rifle elk season. While we were both excited about the chance to hunt elk in our native state, we couldn't have anticipated that this opportunity would provide the 'Hunt of a Lifetime' for both of us.

Matt was able to draw his any-elk tag for Unit 1, located south of Spearfish, with 18 years of preference points. Over those years I have encouraged him to apply for this particular elk Unit because I personally like this area of the Hills and as many of the old timers will claim, some of the larger bulls they feel help 'boost the genetics' of the Black Hills elk herd in adjoining hunting units actually come from this area of the Black Hills. Now I don't know if that is a factually accurate statement, but I do know the area offers a great elk hunting experience due in part to the terrain and challenge of hunting a dense spruce forest.

I also base my favoritism for hunting this Unit in the fact that I drew my 2nd Black Hills any-elk tag just a few years ago in 2018. I had drawn my first Black Hills rifle elk tag in 1990, the year Matt was born, so it was quite a long wait for me to draw my second and most likely my last Black Hills rifle bull tag. The tree canopy in this part of the Black Hills is way denser given the higher annual amounts of snow and rain that part of the Black Hills receives and so it certainly presents some unique challenges for elk hunters. In particular, as I got to spend time in Unit 1 again this fall, I couldn't help but notice that the number of aspens trees in that part of the Hills



has increased substantially from when I worked this area as a young wildlife technician working on a project to reintroduce pine martens to the Black Hills way back in 1980. During the fall of that year, I had the good fortune of being able to spend a lot of time radio-tracking pine

martens in some of the very areas where we would be hunting elk. As I said, what was most obvious to me, in terms of habitat changes to this unit, was the density of both aspen and spruce trees which have increased substantially over the past 40 plus years. In many ways, this is a good thing for wildlife habitat, but tree canopy cover presents a much more challenging situation for rifle elk hunters as you can only see a limited distance into many areas of the forest in this unit. This was especially noticeable during our first few days of this fall's elk season when many of the aspen leaves were still hanging on the trees.

In preparation for this hunt, I had planned to take my wife and daughter camping in Spearfish the week prior to this year's rifle elk season opening. I wanted to give them the chance to also experience Matt's elk hunt in some way and to experience the Black Hills at what is arguably the prettiest time of year to be in the Hills. Our family camping outing also gave me the chance to do some pre-hunt scouting and trail camera work before Matt's arrival at camp a couple of days ahead of the start of the rifle elk season on October 1st.

When Matt arrived, we ran the trail cameras I had put out on several small waterholes, but we had limited success in finding elk. Having hunted the unit in 2018, though, I was still feeling a bit confident in being able to locate elk given my previous hunting experience. In 2018, I was successful in harvesting a smaller 6-point bull that year, so I was anxious to help Matt as best I could as I knew he had big hopes of taking a nice bull given the limited number of times he would have to hunt elk in his home state over his lifetime. Matt turned 35 this year and with the continual increase in the number of resident elk hunting applicants, this could even end up being his one and only any elk rifle hunt of a lifetime too as the drawing odds continue to be more unfavorable. Regardless, we both knew this would be my last chance to accompany him on a rifle elk hunt here in our home state.

Continued on page 5



# Out-of-state guests drive state's hunting, fishing license revenue

By Brad Johnson - SD Wildlife Federation President

If we ever wonder why South Dakota places so much emphasis on marketing its hunting and fishing to out-of-state residents, we need only look at Habitat Stamp revenues.

According to year end reports from SD Game, Fish and Parks, in 2025, nonresident habitat stamp sales generated \$4,072,500 compared to \$1,544,550 from resident habitat stamp sales.

Revenue from residents has been consistent growing from about \$1,521,000 in 2022 to \$1,544,550 in 2025. Nonresident stamp revenue grew from about \$3,786,000 in 2022 to about \$4,073,000 in 2025.

When it comes to hunting license sales, South Dakota residents contributed \$1,048,787 in license revenue while non-residents contributed \$13,835,071, nearly 13 times as much.

On a three year average from 2023 to 2025, the number of resident hunting and fishing licenses amounted to 190,685 compared to 203,732 for non-resident licenses. For the first time in 2024, the number of non-residents buying licenses to hunt small game outnumber the number of residents buying licenses.

The number of SD residents buying fishing licenses was 77,006 compared to 86,605 for non-residents.

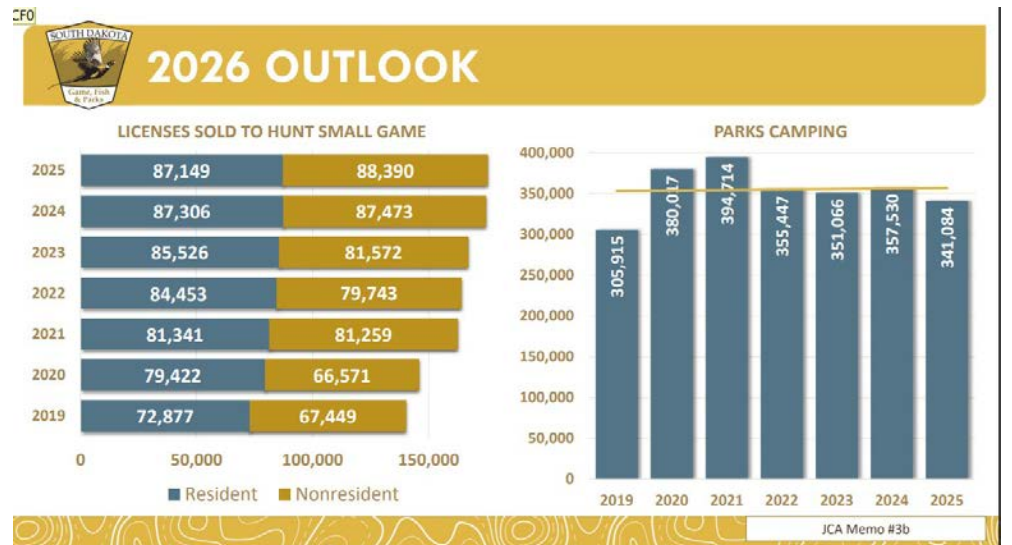
When everything is added together, SD residents generated \$6,355,458 in license revenue compared to \$18,570,930 for non-residents.

Considering how much our small town businesses depend on hunting and fishing; out-of-state residents are the lifeblood of many of our rural

restaurants and hotels.

Since SD GF&P is primarily dependent on revenue from outdoorsmen and women, it is clear there will be a continued emphasis on making our out-of-state guests welcome.

It also is evident that we need to keep working to increase the number of residents hunting and fishing in South Dakota as there were fewer combination licenses sold in 2025 than there were in 2022.



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2025 December 15 - December 14											
License Type	2022	2023	2024	3-yr Avg	2025	2025 Revenue	+/- Licenses		+/- Revenue		
							2024 vs 2025	3 Yr. Avg vs 2025	2024 vs 2025	3 Yr. Avg vs 2025	from 3 Yr. Avg
Combination License Totals	59,002	58,397	58,372	58,590	58,094	\$3,266,510	(278)	(496)	\$237,910	\$219,332	7.20%
Small Game License Totals	55,282	56,560	58,393	56,745	57,173	\$1,048,787	(1,220)	(94)	\$49,499	\$100,751	10.70%
Fishing License Totals	73,529	75,035	77,484	75,349	77,006	\$2,040,161	(478)	1,657	\$258,145	\$297,580	17.08%
RESIDENT TOTALS	187,813	189,992	194,249	190,685	192,273	\$6,355,458	(1,976)	1,588	\$545,554	\$624,188	10.89%
Small Game License Totals	104,099	108,980	116,566	109,882	117,623	\$13,835,071	1,057	7,240	\$2,261,681	\$2,796,245	25.34%
Fishing License Totals	95,506	93,582	92,462	93,850	86,605	\$4,735,859	(5,857)	(7,245)	\$999,114	\$920,190	24.12%
NONRESIDENT TOTALS	199,605	202,562	209,028	203,732	204,228	\$18,570,930	(4,800)	(5)	\$3,260,795	\$3,721,445	25.06%

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"It is horrifying that we have to fight our own government to save the environment." Ansel Adams 1902-1984





## President's Column *by Brad Johnson*

"There can be no greater issue than that of conservation in this country." Theodore Roosevelt in his 'Confession of Faith' speech, Progressive National Convention, Chicago, IL, August 6, 1912

The new year brings another year of working hard to build the South Dakota Wildlife Federation into the state's most powerful advocate for the 200,000 plus residents who hold fishing and hunting licenses as well as everyone who enjoys the outdoors.

I challenge each club to increase their membership by at least 10 percent in the coming year. We need stronger local organizations.

Membership dues contributions account for only about 10 percent of the SDWF budget, so in addition to being dues paying members, we need you to support us through your philanthropy. We need your advocacy in your hometowns to spread the word on the effective work being done at the state level.

The SDWF continues to build partnership as we broaden our networks and continue to build influence.

Through the Camo Coalition, we entered into agreements with the South Dakota Izaak Walton League and South Dakota Lakes and Streams Association to share our lobbyists, Dana Rogers and George Vandel.

This makes sense because our interests are very aligned in support of efforts to enhance our lakes, streams, fisheries, hunting opportunities and access for outdoor recreationists.

We are also working with the Black Hills Area Community Foundation on an initiative to build a stronger network and create a more effective voice for the Black Hills environment. The 1 million acre ecosystem that makes up the Black Hills has a lot of important issues that affect its environmental health.

This effort will continue to expand during the upcoming year.

As a member of the National Wildlife Federation's Board of Directors, I am representing South Dakota, as well as North Dakota, Iowa, Nebraska and Kansas on issues of regional and national consideration.

The NWF entered into a partnership with the Canadian

Wildlife Federation and I am on the committee that interacts regularly with that organization. We know that wildlife, insects and migratory birds don't recognize international boundaries. One of our early international initiatives will revolve around Monarch butterflies.

The US Fish and Wildlife Federation has proposed listing Monarchs as a threatened and endangered species.

The eastern migratory population is estimated to have declined by 90 percent and western migratory populations have declined by more than 95 percent since the 1980s.

The loss of grassland habitat and excessive use of pesticides has had a major impact.

One major way you can help the monarchs is by planting milkweed as well as nectar rich flowers.

Other issues we are monitoring are the threats to our wetlands. The South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources is embarking on a new wetlands mapping tool.

More than 95 percent of our state's wetlands are likely to be without federal protection if current policies continue. South Dakota sportsmen and women know how important our waters are to our lifestyle.

A proposal to create a summer study task force to find ways to deal with Aquatic Invasive Species more effectively was introduced in the state legislature. The SDWF will always be at the forefront of helping protect our lakes and streams.

Data centers are also an area of concern. The advance of Artificial Intelligence requires massive data centers that consume significant amounts of electricity and water. Our goal is to make sure that wildlife and water concerns are protected as these centers and more power plants and powerlines are constructed.

There's a lot at stake and we need a strong SD Wildlife Federation to be in the middle of all these discussions. Please continue

## A Different Kind of Harvest: Sharing the Bounty

by Jeff Olson

As a sportsman, there are a number of ways to help feed those in need. Most of you know me as the President of South Dakota Sportsmen Against Hunger (SAH), but today I want to speak to you as a fellow hunter-gatherer. Whether you hunt, fish, forage, or garden, you have a unique power to fight a quiet crisis in our state.

Hunger in South Dakota is a growing issue. Currently, 114,000 South Dakotans experience food insecurity—and heartbreakingly, one in five are children. Since 1991, SAH has provided over 1.4 million meals through our network of agencies, but this month, I want to focus on how you, as an individual, can provide direct support.

### More Than a Hobby

I often tell people I hunt and fish for a living; my job is just a hobby. While the hunt is thrilling, I truly enjoy the processing and preserving. I am particular about nothing going to waste. This fall alone, I donated nearly 500 pounds of food to local pantries. (with the help of some unwanted pheasants at a couple preserves)

In Rapid City, nearly 15,000 people face food insecurity. I've developed a relationship with a pantry in North Rapid where I provide home-processed burger and pheasants. Because I also garden, I provide fresh plums, pears, and raspberries, along with home-canned salsa, pickles, and jellies.

While organizations like Feeding South Dakota require meat to be handled by a licensed processor, many local pantries are grateful to accept:

- Home-processed frozen game (labeled and dated).
- Home-canned items (jellies, salsas, vegetables).
- Fresh garden produce.

### How You Can Help This Season

Even when deer numbers are down, I encourage you to apply for as many tags as possible. If you harvest a doe, take it to an SAH-participating processor; we will cover the fee. If you harvest a buck, you pay the processing, and we ensure the meat reaches a pantry.

If you process your own game like I do, contact your local pantry directly. A great way to start the season is to clean out your freezer and donate last year's remaining meat to make room for the new harvest.

### Five Ways to Fight Hunger

1. **Donate to a Processor:** Take your harvest to a participating locker ([feedtheneedsd.com](http://feedtheneedsd.com)).
2. **Give Directly:** Deliver home-processed meat or garden produce to a local food pantry.
3. **Donate Funds:** Contribute to processing costs via our website or when purchasing your GFP licenses.
4. **Share Your Garden:** Provide healthy fruits and vegetables to neighbors or pantries.
5. **Volunteer Your Time:** Help at a pantry or homeless center. You can even teach their cooks the art of preparing wild game!

Any way you can help us fight hunger in South Dakota is deeply appreciated. Please reach out with any questions.

**Jeff Olson** President, South Dakota Sportsmen Against Hunger  
[feedtheneedsd.com](http://feedtheneedsd.com) | 1-605-393-5225



## SDWF Executive Directors Column *by Dana R. Rogers*

The gale force winds and subzero temperatures can't stop hearty sportsmen from hitting the ice in search of hardwater bounty across South Dakota. It also can't stop the legislative session we're attending, monitoring and working through in Pierre at the Capitol.

The speed of legislation updates and movement won't be matched with updates in a newsletter you'll receive two weeks after I type this column. George Vandell and I have been monitoring legislation we believe you as sportsmen, should be concerned about and keep an eye on. I'll send a few updates out via the Camo Coalition e-mail list and they'll be posted to Facebook and our SDWF website for your review. As of today, we are tracking 22 bills at the capitol and expect more in the coming week before the deadline for filing.

Here are a few to keep in mind when discussing issues with your elected officials.

**HB 1001 - provide for prescribed burning of state-owned land by a person owning adjoining land and to declare an emergency.**

**HB 1005 - provide a sales and use tax exemption for goods and services related to data center operations.**

**HB 1047 - make an appropriation for the construction costs at the Blue Dog State Fish Hatchery, and to declare an emergency.**

**HB 1122 - provide for the licensure of certain fishing guides, and to provide a penalty therefor.**

**HB 1156 - extend each waterfowl hunting season for veterans and active duty personnel.**

**HB 1157 - establish a task force for the purpose of studying aquatic invasive species infestations, to make an appropriation therefor, and to declare an emergency.**

**HB 1195 - provide free admission to state parks and recreation areas for residents enrolled as members of Indian tribes.**

**SB 37 - make appropriations for water and environmental purposes and to declare an emergency.**

**SB 115 - remove the prohibition pertaining to the shooting of mourning doves located within specific areas.**

**SB 148 - terminate bounty payments for the control of nest predation.**

**SB 160 - require the registration of fishing guides.**

**SB 201 - authorize the use of a drone for the location and recovery of mortally wounded deer and elk and to provide a penalty therefor.**

Each week the directors of the SDWF meets online to discuss the weeks events and what bills to monitor, oppose or support. This year we are also joined by the Izaak Walton League and the SD Lakes and Streams Association board. We are typically like minded and George and I are assisting their lobbying efforts.

Two bills that have already been 'dealt' with by the legislature were **SB 16 - provide for the licensure of fishing and hunting guides, and to provide a penalty therefor.** This bill was submitted by Sen. Voight of Rapid City and he made the decision to remove his own bill a week later. The 2nd bill is **HB 1037 - exempt active-duty members of the armed forces of the United States and veterans from paying a resident fishing license fee.** This bill was heard in the House Ag and Natural Resources committee and sent to the 41st Day last week.

On its surface, HB 1037 seems like a great gesture and nod to SD's Veterans. However, we opposed it due to it's 2nd and 3rd order effects. SD has an estimated 60,000 to 65,000 veterans living here. That does not include active-duty members or active-duty members stationed outside SD. Extrapolating the 24% of SD residents that hold a hunting or fishing license, that comes to 14,400 at a minimum. At \$31 annually for a fishing license and considering the 3 to 1 funding match from the Federal government through the Dingle Johnson tax on fishing related goods... You can easily estimate a loss of approximately \$1.34 Million annually. That would have a catastrophic negative effect on our fisheries funding.

The next priority, at this moment, is helping get Rep. Roger DeGroot's HB 1122 out of committee and in front of the entire House of Representatives. The Camo Coalition e-mail blasts contain links for you to locate your legislators, get their phone numbers and e-mail address. PLEASE get en-

gaged on the issues you feel strongly about. Leveraging the 220,000 resident sportsmen in SD is critical to getting voters to contact their legislators and express their thoughts. Most of the legislators aren't active sportsmen, so it's often difficult to get them to understand the effects their decisions have on our resident sportsmen. The Camo Coalition e-mails have the contacts to all of the House and Senate Ag and Natural Resources committee members. That's a HUGE place to put your voice into action.

South Dakota is one of the few states that has ZERO guide and outfitter guardrails in place. No licensing or explicit specific requirements. Other than the fishing license or if a habitat stamp is purchased, nothing is put directly back into our GFP to help offset the impacts. Perhaps nowhere is this better illustrated than up on our glacial lakes right now. Dozens of Snobear's pulling limit upon limit daily during the ice season. Many of these guides aren't even SD residents. To be clear, we are NOT anti-guide/outfitter, but we do feel strongly they need to be regulated. Nobody has any idea how many there even are operating in SD.

Most will remember that last year we helped Rep. DeGroot try and get a full guide and outfitter licensing bill passed. Similarly, this year Sen. Voight introduced a bill that was not unlike the previous years bill. At this time, a full hunting guide and outfitter bill is politically untenable. But, given the makeup of the opposition and arguments from past years, we believe a bill to require fishing guides to be licensed has a good chance at success. It's a start!

**HB 1157** – would establish a task force studying aquatic invasives and their impacts in South Dakota. Rep. Tim Goodwin, Hill City brought this bill and we are working in conjunction with the Izaak Walton League and the South Dakota Lakes and Streams association to move it forward. You'll see another article in this newsletter on the damages being caused in our lakes in South Dakota by zebra mussels.

**SB 148** Nest Predator Bounty Program. Last year, we supported ending the Nest Predator Bounty Program. The basis of this support was the scientific data showing its lack of effectiveness as well as the huge funding loss from our South Dakota Game Fish and Parks department. Funds that would be much better used on habitat projects. We fully support trapping, just not this ineffective program.

Anyone that wishes to discuss bills, thoughts, concerns, ideas etc. can contact me and I'll be happy to visit with you and listen to your input. The most effective thing you can do is stay informed and engaged with your legislators. Citizens can testify by signing up through the bill/committee links and we'd welcome your assistance. Pierre resident, longtime SDWF advocate and dedicated sportsman Jon Simpson has been helping George at I in the Capitol attending meetings and testifying. Thanks, Jon, for all your assistance and dedicated support to wildlife, habitat and conservation.

Last week was the first meeting of the year for the Youth Conservation Camp Executive Committee. Jayden Halsey, Kemari Blumhardt, Bob Schaefer, Mike McKernan, Charlie Rokusek, as well as GFP rockstar employees KayCee Smith and Lacy Elrod. The camp registration for your high schoolers will open 1 Feb and the per camper cost will be \$600 for the week. In this issue you'll see their informational letter. If you have a child, grandchild or know an interested teenager you think would benefit, please encourage them to attend. These awesome directors provide a phenomenal camp experience at Camp Bob Marshall the first week in June every year!

In closing, I wish you all a wonderful 2026 in Gods Great Outdoors. South Dakotan's are extremely blessed with wonderful recreational opportunities and I hope you can make as much time as possible to enjoy them with your friends and family. Always remember when afield to Respect the Land, Respect the Landowners and Respect the Wildlife!





Continued from page 1

On our first day hunting we took a bit of a 'long shot' going into an area I'd never hunted before on the far west side of Unit 1. Matt operates his own home remodeling business based in our hometown of Brandon and he had a client who suggested he might contact his brother who lived in the Hills for some guidance on which areas of Unit 1 to hunt. It turns out, his client's brother was one of those elk hunting 'nuts' or as I might call them, 'Good Will Hunters' who keeps a close pulse on the Black Hills elk population year after year. I have to say, the suggestions offered by his client's brother were spot on. With his advice, we ventured down some challenging trails to get to the parking spot he had meticulously described to Matt. Unfortunately, we discovered upon our arrival that the last few hundred yards of road that would take us into SD during the wee hours of opening morning had been gated by the US Forest Service preventing us from getting into SD and our hunting unit. Nonetheless, we parked at the gate and walked the last ¼ mile to get into South Dakota. This required that Matt keep his rifle cased and unloaded until we got to the SD border. While the advice we got was solid and the area was pretty 'elky', we didn't see or hear any elk that morning, but it would certainly merit looking at this spot again on any future elk hunts.

After striking out that morning, we ate some lunch and decided to hunt the far north end of the unit later that afternoon and evening in a spot not too far from Higgins Gulch. We checked for fresh elk sign at a few of the water holes on the way in and we also grabbed the cards from a few of our trail cameras too. The location for our evening sit was just a few hundred yards from where I had killed my bull in 2018 though we only found some limited elk sign and tracks on the way in. No elk bugles were heard, and no elk appeared that evening. Nonetheless, it was a beautiful evening to wrap up another great day in the Black Hills. And right at sundown, as if almost on cue, we were greeted by the call of a coyote that couldn't have been more than 150 yards from our location. We hiked back to the truck enjoying the silence of the woods and would discuss the day's events and start making plans for our hunt on Day 2 on the 45-minute drive back to town.

We were not hunting elk all by ourselves this fall as I happened to have a close friend and former GFP employee, like me, who was also accompanying a friend of his who had drawn a rifle any-elk tag in that same unit. On the way back to Spearfish, we spotted their vehicle and saw them coming out of the woods after a close encounter they had with a bull just after sunset. They also had the good fortune of having a local 'Good Will Elk Hunter' friend who was accompanying them that day providing some advice and counsel on areas to explore. And as it turns out, our two hunting parties would eventually meet a couple of more 'Good Will Elk Hunters' during the time we were in the field, fellas who would also provide us with additional valuable insight into elk hunting locations to check out. One of the guys, in fact, would wind up offering the chance for my friends to sit in their hunting blind for the evening. Another fellow I spoke to who was doing some elk scouting himself would also share some of his valuable insight on what he had been seeing and hearing. And to my surprise, he even gave me his phone number saying that if we got an elk down and needed help to give him a call and he'd help us pack him out.

Now, I have hunted South Dakota my entire lifetime, starting by accompanying my dad on duck hunts before I was in elementary school, and most hunters in my experience can be tight-lipped about where to go and what they've been seeing for game. So, getting such great advice from some of the good folks who live in the Hills was not only valuable to our hunting experience, but it was also certainly indicative of what other friends have told me about their experiences hunting elk in our home state too. Perhaps it's the limited nature of the opportunities we all get to hunt these majestic animals that encourages this kind of helpfulness; I just don't know the exact reason for their willingness to help us out. What I do know, however, is it was not only refreshing to find the degree of eagerness and multiple offers to help us given by other elk hunters, but it also helped make the whole hunt experience even more positive for me and my son as well as our friends. So, my advice is, when your turn comes to hunt elk in the Black Hills, don't pass up the chance to visit with some of the local elk 'nuts' or 'Good Will Elk Hunters'.... They can be a great help!

As we visited with our friends over supper, we were especially encouraged by their encounter with a bugling bull the evening of the



first day. That is always a hopeful sign for rifle hunters as I have come to learn over my years of hunting elk in both South Dakota and Montana. While bow hunters get to chase elk bulls during the entire month of September here in South Dakota, which of course includes the 'peak of the rut' time period, rifle elk hunters are, on average, hard pressed to hear elk talking when their turn comes to hunt. It's obviously Mother Nature who dictates the elk breeding season, but bulls (and even cows) often tend to shut up all together by the time rifle season begins on October 1st, so my best advice to rifle elk hunters is to make the most of scouting and hunt hard during the first week of the season. The lack of 'elk talk' can be frustrating as a rifle hunter but this is simply a biological fact given the fall progression of the breeding season. Fewer cows will be in peak estrus by the time the first week in October arrives. And in addition, to this hard truth, it can be even tougher to locate elk in a unit with a dense forest canopy if they aren't talking.

By the time we headed back to camp, our two hunting parties had each made a plan for the following morning. My friends were gonna go back to try to work the bull they heard that evening and we planned to head to an area we had looked at earlier where there were lots of aspen trees intermingled with some private land tracts located toward the south end of the unit. Often times when elk are pressured on public lands, they'll retreat to some of the private lands scattered throughout the Hills, so if you can work some areas that are 'intermingled' with private holdings of 80 acres or more, you can sometimes increase your odds of catching a bull that may have ventured off private land in pursuit of cows or to feed or find water the previous evening.

Our second morning sit was in a big basin loaded with aspen trees located towards the southwest end of our unit. We were just a little more than a mile from the Wyoming border that I told Matt was also some pretty 'elk-y lookin' country'. I had hopes that we might catch the glimpse of a bull walking through a clearing in the draw we had set up on or possibly hear a bugling bull in the aspens we could work. But while it was another gorgeous morning in the Black Hills, we struck out again without seeing or hearing any bulls or cows. They just weren't talking.

Before we would abandon our hunting spot that morning, we were startled by a warning bird call, (from a bird whose call I didn't recognize). I assumed the startling call from this vigilant bird was foretelling the other forest critters of the presence of something they should be concerned about. While we had been sitting motionless for quite some time, I immediately noticed a rustling in some small aspen trees just below us. I initially thought it might be a deer-sized critter looking for a daytime bed or perhaps a coyote chasing a rabbit. I pointed out the tree movement to Matt, but the critter never showed itself and we were left to wonder what it might have been.

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About 30 minutes later, however, the two of us were abruptly startled by the scream of an admonishing bobcat. We both surmised it might have been the bobcat that had made the aspens rustle earlier that morning. Either way, his hunting route had now brought him to within just a few yards of us and apparently as he approached the edge of the aspen grove, he didn't like our looks or more than likely, didn't like our smell. He made 3 loud calls and after the third, bounded off to look for a morning meal elsewhere. It's not very often you find yourself startled by a wild animal 'working' its own neighborhood just like you weren't there. It's even more unique, though, to get the chance to see a bobcat up that close. While we weren't making much progress in filling Matt's elk tag, we nonetheless had an iconic encounter with one of our state's most secretive predators.

After having a 'freeze-dried' breakfast at Timon Campground, Matt spent began spending time on OnX looking to find a spot for us to sit during the evening. Because it had been so dry, a lot of the more permanent water holes in our Unit had dried up earlier in the summer. Because September had brought several nice rain showers to this part of the Hills, we were still finding water in some of the smaller puddles or small, shallow man-made water holes on Forest Service lands. As Matt reviewed the detailed aerial photo maps, he spotted what appeared to be some shallow waterholes in a drainage not far from where we'd sat that morning. He noted there were a couple of larger tracts of intermingled private land in that area too and we both conjectured that given the amount of archery elk hunting activity we'd seen in this area during the last days of September, perhaps some of the elk were taking refuge on that private land. We would soon find out if our hunch paid off.

After lunch, we headed to the area we thought might be a good bet for the evening sit and just as we got out of the truck to get our gear on, Matt says "Dad, there's a bull bugling....hurry up, let's go." Now I must admit, I'm a little slower than I used to be getting out of the truck, not so much due to lack of speed but the amount of gear I think I have to bring with. Even though I'm not doing the hunting, I have my elk hunting pack and all my packed gear, my sidearm, binoculars, a cow call, bugle tube, and of course my GPS. As an east river flatlander, I've gotten turned around in the Black Hills (in fact I almost spent an overnight in Black Hills in the month of December when I was radio-tracking pine martens), so these days I always make sure I have a GPS waypoint marked for the truck, even if I think we're just going a few hundred yards into the woods.

As I quietly shut the truck's door and we both hurried up the hill, I too could hear the bull bugling. In fact, within 5 minutes we had 3 bulls bugling within an area of about 300 yards from our location. I first blew my bugle just a couple of hundred yards from the truck and got a response from all 3 bulls. The bugle of one of the bulls was noticeably higher pitched, an indication he was a younger satellite bull. He seemed to be drifting off to our northeast at maybe 150 yards. It was clear he was headed away from us as his next few bugles would indicate. The same for one of the other 'lower pitched' bulls. He was straight north of us at a range of about 200 yards, and I assumed he might be headed for the private land about ½ mile in the same direction from our location.

The other older bull was more excited and by far the most aggressive, answering almost every bugle call I made. We'd make a play for him, we decided, so we headed down the draw toward him at a quick pace. He was not far from the draw and water holes we had planned to sit by that evening, so once we got to an opening in the trees where Matt would have a good view of the water holes, I told him to sit down at the base of a large pine tree and get his shooting sticks set up.

Matt was using my Sako .300 WSM rifle loaded with 190 grain Nosler Accubond bullets. In fact, he was using the very same box of bullets I used the last time I elk hunted. A .300 WSM is plenty of rifle for elk. In fact, it's a darn good choice in my opinion, although newer cartridges with their fast-twist rate barrels, like the 7 PRC, .300 PRC or 7 mm Backcountry, are quickly taking over the interest of western big game hunters. When I shot my bull in 2018 with the Sako .300 WSM, my shot had crushed the top of his right shoulder facing toward me. The Accubond bullet, in fact, passed through both lungs and cleanly exited the other side. Nonetheless, the bull still ran over 180 yards

before he expired. Elk are without question big, tough animals and difficult to bring down, even when you think you're using plenty of gun. And while the muzzle velocity of any elk rifle load is an important consideration, selecting the right bullet size and type, in my opinion, is even a more important consideration. Accubond or similar-type bullets are a solid choice as are many of the newer all copper bullets. Whatever you choose, make sure you sight-in your rifle with the same ammunition you'll be using on your elk hunt.

The bull continued to respond to each of my bugles and now that Matt was set up, I got more vigorous with my calling. We went back and forth for more than 10 minutes, and I would intentionally bugle over the top of him when he bugled to try to get him even more worked up. I then grabbed a large 3-inch thick, long pine branch and began raking it on an 8-foot pine tree next to me. I raked the tree trunk up and down trying to break off small branches to mimic the sound of a big bull working over a tree with his antlers. I continued raking trees and bugling in as excited a manner as I could for another 5 minutes while staying out of sight just a few yards behind Matt.

As he was bugling, I could tell the bull was moving back and forth through a small stand of aspens on a ridge just slightly above us. I guessed him to be no more than 150 yards from us in the thick aspen stand, but he wouldn't commit to coming closer.

By this time, I'd been calling the bull for almost 20 minutes, and I was getting worried the rubber band on my bugle call was getting stretched to the point where it might not sound right the next time I called. Having had lots of conversations with my coworkers at GFP over the years who are also avid elk hunters, their consistent advice was always to 'be aggressive' while working any bull. And if a bull doesn't want to come closer, you might be forced into being aggressive yourself by going after him. "Be the elk," they'd say, and don't worry about spooking him if you go into the woods making noise....elk make noise while going through the woods and they'll expect to hear another bull approaching them making noise. I've come to learn this too from my own experience where I was previously too timid working some bulls, thinking it might be better to stay put and be quiet. But bull elk in rut are not very quiet when they move through the woods they'll always make noise.

The clock was ticking on this bull, and I grew increasingly anxious and concerned his interest in my calls might not continue. And if so, our chance to see him and for Matt to get a shot might slip away if we hesitated too long. It had already been a long encounter, longer than any I'd had with a bugling bull to date, so with that in mind, I said to Matt, "you're gonna have to go up after him."

I could tell Matt was a little nervous at my advice, but he handed me his shooting sticks and made a hurried traverse across the draw with

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the water holes. I planned to give him a head start of 75 yards or so thinking I would call behind him as he headed up the hill. Once he made his way to a small opening or 'chute' in the trees that I could see from my vantage point, I thought I'd leave my hiding spot and follow. I could see him clearly and as he was about to round the last big aspen tree at the bottom of the chute and head up the hill, I saw him quickly kneel. He would later tell me he could see the bull's antlers through the trees coming right at him. As I looked up the chute to see why he suddenly knelt, I could see the bull coming down the chute as well. I saw the bull suddenly stop and as Matt told me later, "I knew he saw me, Dad, and I knew I had to shoot right away, or he'd turn and run."

One thing I have learned when hunting animals as large as deer or elk in the dense woods, for whatever reason, I will tend to overestimate the distance they are away from me. Perhaps other hunters who spend most of their time hunting the wide-open prairies like I do have had the same difficulty. I don't know if it's the density of the trees or the limited distance you can see into the woods that impacts my ability to accurately estimate the distances to big game animals, but I do know my tendency is to over-estimate distances while hunting in trees. Thankfully over the past 10 years I have been able to verify some of these distances using my GPS. For example, when I shot my bull elk in the Black Hills in 2018, I was confident he was at least 70 yards away when I pulled the trigger. Before I headed toward where I thought the bull fell, I marked a GPS waypoint both where I was sitting and where the bull was when I shot him. I had to walk back and forth 3 times before I was able to convince myself as to the accuracy of the GPS. From where I sat to where the bull stood was a mere 87 feet and nowhere close to 70 yards. I have now begun using a range finder and hope to improve my level of accuracy in the future!

This time both Matt and I would make the same inaccurate determination of the distance he had shot his bull from. We again thought the bull was about 75 yards away from him when he made his first shot. In fact, it wasn't until I came back to the kill site later the following week that I would again verify the actual distance he shot the bull at as being far closer than what we had both estimated it to be. Sure enough, this bull was no more than 30 yards from him when he took his first shot.

The bull was still slightly uphill and was facing Matt at a slight angle to his left. His first shot pierced center-punched the bull's 4th rib, about a foot below the spine on his right side. The bullet's flight path angled across both lungs from front to rear. I heard the 'thud' of his first shot striking home and knew he had hit him well as I could see the bull stumble slightly as he turned to head back up the hill and into the aspens. I could also see Matt working the bolt on his rifle trying to chamber another round. He later told me that he got excited and short-stroked the bolt...hard to imagine not getting excited with a bull elk of that size at 30 yards. I yelled 'shoot him again, Matt' in as calm a manner as I could not wanting to invoke even more stress during the excitement as he struggled with the rifle bolt. It seemed like a minute or two had passed as the bull tried to scramble up the hill, but it was only a few short seconds. Matt quickly chambered another round, and he hit the bull with a second shot. This shot, we would later learn, was even more fatal as it hit the bull low on the left side of the chest, just behind the front shoulder. Even so, the bull continued up the hill for another 75 yards before falling in a small clearing. Thankfully he fell in a flat, open area that would make our job of field dressing a lot easier.



Matt's second shot appeared to have been a heart shot; however, we didn't retrieve the bullet or open up the front portion of the chest area as we were using the 'gutless method' to quarter and field dress the bull. As we field dressed the bull, I found the first Accubond bullet, well-mushroomed but significantly lighter by about 60 grains of weight as I would later learn. This bullet laid just beneath the bull's hide on the left side. If you look at the picture, you can see evidence of Matt's second shot on the left side of the bull's chest. On reflection, it was some fair shooting on his first bull elk hunt even while using a rifle that was somewhat unfamiliar.

We both scrambled up the hill, each along a little different path, and we met at the spot where the bull had collapsed. When we got to him, the bull was taking his final breath. And as most hunters do, we had a sigh of relief that the animal was recovered and taken in as humane a manner as possible.

After we took a few photos and before we began the task of quartering the bull to pack him out, we both stood over him with feelings of what I would describe as 'shock and awe'. While the result is that Matt had taken a nice bull, our 'shock and awe' was more based upon the experience of the utter adrenaline rush we both had over the last 30 minutes of this hunt. To say the least, the experience was surreal and will be for some time for us both.

As with most of the big game hunts we go on together, it is way more about the experience for us than taking the game. We both enjoyed the experience of camping together, scouting for elk sign together, hiking the woods and sitting together and of course the camaraderie of the experience with our friends and sharing the days as father and son. This most certainly will be one of the most special hunting experiences of our lifetimes.

As we proceeded to field dress the bull, darkness soon overtook the two of us and we turned on our headlamps to continue the task at hand. As I proceeded to quarter the bull, I was thankful for having my son there to haul the quarters back to the truck. And I was even more thankful to see our hunting companions accompanying him back from taking out the last quarter. I had sent them a Garmin In-Reach message with our location after Matt shot the bull and it was sure a blessing to have them help me complete the field dressing process.

As we placed the last cuts of elk into our meat sacks and packs, a mature bull began to steadily bugle less than a couple of hundred yards above us. I surmised it might be the other bigger bull that had gone to the north of us toward the private land earlier that evening. Maybe he was trying to find some cows or perhaps he was after a drink of water. Then again, maybe he was trying to locate one of his rivals who now lay on the ground beneath us. Regardless, the almost primal sound of his bugles reminded us of why we were here.

The 4 of us got the last of our gear gathered and we headed to the truck arriving a little after 9 pm. We were exhausted but still excited about what had happened. We quickly placed the last portions of meat into our coolers and had a celebratory beer sitting on the end of my truck's tailgate. As the pockets of cool and warm air swirled alternately around us, we reflected upon our success and again marveled at what a great day it had been. Moreover, Matt and I had high hopes that perhaps tomorrow morning would bring a similar opportunity for our hunting companions in this very same spot.

Post Script - Many of you have no doubt experienced a hunting trip much like this one. More importantly, my sincere hope is that many others of you might have this very same chance in the future. No matter if it is hunting elk or watching your son or daughter, grandchild, wife or friend take their first duck, deer, pheasant or walleye, I encourage you to not let a single year go by without experiencing one of our state's unique and special kinds of outdoor opportunities. And while it is a bit sad for me to realize I very likely won't be on Matt's next rifle bull elk hunt in the Black Hills, our hunting experience together this year could not have been more memorable or special. For me, just knowing when my son does get the chance to take to the woods in the Black Hills on another elk hunt or in another western state, perhaps with his own son or daughter, I can rest easy knowing he'll be able to reflect on the memories and specialness of this day where he got the chance to take that 'Dream-Maker Bull' with his Dad by his side as a mentor.



## Working Lands, Lasting Wildlife: How Producers and Habitat Stewards Are Shaping South Dakota's Future

Wildlife in South Dakota doesn't live only on public lands or in protected areas — it nests, feeds, and raises young on working lands.

The grasslands that support pheasants, pollinators, songbirds, deer, and countless other species are often the same acres that grow crops, sustain cattle herds, and support multi-generation family operations. The future of wildlife in our state depends heavily on the farmers and ranchers who manage these landscapes every day. That is where the Second Century Habitat Fund (SCHF) plays a critical role.

SCHF was created to restore and retain pheasant habitat while protecting South Dakota's outdoor heritage for future generations. But the impact extends well beyond one species. Through its Working Lands Program, SCHF improves private lands in ways that benefit both producers and wildlife. The program centers on a simple truth: healthy grasslands support productive operations and thriving wildlife at the same time, and lasting conservation in South Dakota depends on the voluntary stewardship of landowners.

Across South Dakota, SCHF works directly with landowners to convert marginal cropland — acres that are often costly, risky, and difficult to farm — back into perennial grass and forb cover. These fields frequently sit on lighter soils, steeper slopes, or areas prone to erosion. When kept in annual crop production, they can struggle economically and contribute to soil loss, nutrient runoff, and reduced habitat value. When restored to diverse grasslands, those same acres provide nesting and brood-rearing cover for pheasants, habitat for grassland songbirds and pollinators, forage and cover for deer and other wildlife, and soil-building systems that reduce erosion and improve water quality. Marginal acres become high-value habitat.

Producers are not new to conservation. A recent report from the Western Landowners Alliance found that landowners across western states invested more than four hundred million dollars of their own funds in conservation in a single year, often at personal financial cost. Many also reported turning down income-generating opportunities in order to protect habitat and natural resources. While that study did not directly include South Dakota, its findings reflect what we see here every day. Farmers and ranchers are conservation leaders who make land management decisions that benefit wildlife, soil, and water, often with limited recognition and financial return. Programs like SCHF's Working Lands initiative help support and amplify that stewardship ethic.

This work is not theoretical. It is happening on the ground across South Dakota. Through the Working Lands Program and partner-driven projects, SCHF has helped restore and improve thousands of acres of grassland habitat. Each enrolled field represents secure nesting cover for pheasants, brood habitat rich in insects and overhead protection, larger connected grassland areas for songbirds, and diverse plant communities that support pollinators. By focusing on marginal cropland, SCHF helps producers improve land resilience while creating long-term wildlife habitat. These projects contribute to stronger pheasant populations, healthier grassland ecosystems, and more sustainable agricultural landscapes.

Just as important, the impact often lasts well beyond the life of a contract. At a recent event, one producer stopped by the SCHF booth and shared that even though his agreement had ended, he continues to follow the grazing protocol introduced through the program. He ex-

plained that he has seen how those practices increased wildlife use on his land while still working well for his livestock operation. That kind of voluntary continuation is one of the strongest signs of success — when habitat-friendly management becomes part of how land is cared for long after formal incentives end.

Conservation on working lands must also make sense economically. SCHF's Working Lands Program helps offset the risk of transitioning marginal acres into long-term habitat. Current incentives total \$450 per acre west river and \$750 per acre east river over the life of a 10-year agreement, equivalent to \$45 and \$75 per acre per year. In many cases, payments are structured as a one-time lump-sum payment, helping landowners manage cash flow while committing those acres to long-term habitat. These incentives help stabilize income on less-productive acres while improving soil health and wildlife value. Funding is limited, and projects are prioritized based on habitat benefit, landscape impact, and landowner readiness.

Producers interested in the program can begin by reaching out to a local habitat professional or biologist working with SCHF. These conservation staff help evaluate fields, discuss management goals, design habitat plans, and guide landowners through enrollment. Because funding is limited and tied to conservation priorities and available budgets, early communication is strongly encouraged. Projects are reviewed and ranked based on habitat value, landscape impact, and readiness, and available funds are committed as qualified projects are approved. Landowners considering enrollment are encouraged to start the conversation sooner rather than later to ensure their acres can be considered when funding is available.

Healthy grasslands sustain pheasant hunting, wildlife viewing, and outdoor recreation, all central to South Dakota's culture and economy. These landscapes also improve soil resilience during drought and heavy rain, protect water quality, and strengthen rural communities. Investing in working lands habitat means investing in the ecological and economic future of our state.

The success of working lands conservation depends not only on landowners and conservation professionals, but also on people who care about wildlife and the future of South Dakota's landscapes. While producers already invest significant time and resources into stewardship, organizations like SCHF help make larger-scale habitat restoration possible. Support from individuals, businesses, and conservation-minded partners helps establish new grassland acres, cover seed and implementation costs, expand partnerships with farmers and ranchers, and accelerate habitat restoration in priority landscapes. Every restored field means more nesting cover, more brood habitat, and more resilient ecosystems for wildlife.

The future of South Dakota's wildlife will largely be shaped on private lands. By working with farmers and ranchers, SCHF helps ensure grasslands remain part of our landscape and wildlife has the habitat it needs to thrive. Conservation and agriculture are not opposing forces; they are partners in sustaining South Dakota's natural resources. With continued support from landowners, conservation groups, and people who value wildlife, working lands can remain lasting wildlife lands.

To learn more about the Working Lands Program or to support habitat efforts across South Dakota, visit [www.sdhabitatfund.com](http://www.sdhabitatfund.com).

## NEWS BRIEFS FOR OUTDOORS

Please consider donation to either the SD Wildlife Federation or the Camo Coalition. Donation links can be found on our website.

Affiliate and member ship dues account for only about 10 percent of our annual budget with the remainder coming from contributions.

We will be offering some new raffle opportunities this year. Please buy tickets. Encourage your friends and family to become members. Strength is in numbers and it is important to increase our membership.

Mark your calendars for our annual state convention on May 1-2 in Huron.

We will be drawing for a pheasant hunt with SD Wildlife Federation President Brad Johnson. The hunt will be near Watertown and includes lodging. We also will be drawing for our \$3,000 cash raffle, and we have regular gun raffles. Buy your tickets now.

You can buy raffles, make donations and sign up new members on our website at [sdwf.org](http://sdwf.org).



# Wildlife, water, communities deserve protection in siting data centers - By April Higa - National Wildlife Federation

Data centers are changing the landscape of energy production and consumption in the United States. Increased development of data centers present complex issues: including impacts on water supply, land use, and surrounding wildlife and communities.

However, before we can tackle those, we need to understand what exactly data centers are.

Data centers are physical buildings filled with computer servers used to store and process data. They form the backbone of the internet: every Google search, phone app, cloud service and artificial intelligence (AI) inquiry relies on servers housed in these facilities. Within the centers themselves, you'll find racks of servers, massive cooling systems, backup power generators, and network interconnects all working 24/7 to process data, store information, and serve content.

Data centers can range from 20,000 square feet to over 10 million square feet. That's the difference between a Target and an entire university campus. Running thousands of servers produces enormous amounts of heat, which means cooling infrastructure is essential. These cooling systems themselves require large amounts of electricity.

## Why the recent surge in attention?

You're hearing about data centers more than ever because we are in the middle of the AI Gold Rush. As machine learning workloads explode, companies are racing to build new AI-optimized data centers at unprecedented speeds. The International Energy Agency predicts data centers will make up half of U.S. grid growth by 2030.

Traditional data centers have been around since the mid-20th century. But AI data centers differ in two critical ways: hardware and scale. Traditional data centers were designed primarily to store data, run websites, and manage cloud applications with much less space required. Modern AI operations require different hardware, and perform thousands of operations simultaneously.

This new class of hardware draws much more power, generates more heat, and requires denser racks and heavier infrastructure. As a result, a data center that originally consumed about five megawatts of energy might jump to 50 megawatts when configured for large-scale AI operations. That's the difference between enough electricity for 1,500 homes compared to 15,000-25,000 homes or a small town.

## What are the impacts on energy?

With data centers becoming one of the biggest contributors to electricity demand growth in the United States, new challenges regarding grid reliability and energy affordability have emerged. Researchers at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory estimate that in 2028, 6.7-12 percent of our national electricity consumption will be from data center energy use, compared to 4.4 percent in 2023.

Data center development is also very geographically concentrated—with 80 percent of centers located in only 15 states. This clustering effect can cause grid stress and become a major issue of energy reliability in local regions.

Energy planners are concerned about "load growth"—the increased peak electricity demand—which has caused states to scramble to secure reliable energy sources. Load growth has led to several states "delaying planned retirements of existing coal and gas units" and others looking at nuclear energy as an alternative.

Grid upgrades often take years and can shift the costs onto local ratepayers, who may pay for transmission and generation upgrades that primarily serve data centers, and not the public. The National Caucus of Environmental Legislators warns that costs may increase by an average of 19 percent by 2028 with higher rates being passed on to utility consumers. If clean resources lag behind rising demand, decarbonization efforts may be compromised and ratepayers will be liable.



## How are the environment, wildlife, and communities impacted?

Water is an equally urgent issue. Cooling systems are extremely water-intensive: a single mid-sized data center can use up to 300,000 gallons of water per day, or 110,000,000 gallons per year. Meta's 2024 sustainability report showed that its data centers used a total of 3,078 megaliters, or 813,000,000 gallons, that year. According to a 2025 Bloomberg report, about two-thirds of data centers built or in construction since 2022 have been in regions already plagued with high-water stress.

These withdrawals directly affect ecosystems and wildlife. Lower stream flows and warmer water can devastate sensitive species that rely on cold, clean water. In Alabama, environmental groups warned that a proposed data center could wipe out the federally threatened spring pygmy sunfish by altering and depleting its tiny spring-fed habitat. Similar conflicts are emerging nationwide as data centers move into ecologically fragile regions.

## What's next?

Data center growth is not going away anytime soon and data center growth should not come at the expense of energy affordability and reliability, wildlife, and communities.

Stay tuned for more NWF resources on data centers, as we continue to track potential impacts and identify ways to ensure this development works to benefit people and wildlife.



*Google's Council Bluffs Data Center uses more than one billion gallons of treated Missouri River water per year Credit: Chad Davis*



## South Dakota's Zebra Mussel Infestation: Warnings, Spread, and Ongoing Concerns - By Steve Charron

### SD Lakes & Streams Association Board President

In 2008, then-Gov. Mike Rounds convened state government leaders to begin preparing for the threat of aquatic invasive species (AIS).

He warned that the introduction of invasive organisms could devastate South Dakota's surface waters and urged state agencies to take steps to protect the state's groundwater resources as well.

Rounds emphasized that the issue extended beyond recreational fishing and boating, affecting municipalities, irrigators, and other users whose livelihoods and infrastructure depend on clean water. The warning raised concerns about the potential for significant environmental and economic consequences if the state failed to act.

Despite those early cautions, South Dakota began to see confirmed infestations several years later. In 2014, zebra mussels were discovered in Lewis and Clark Lake. Such infestations are often a precursor to broader ecological disruption.

By 2016, zebra mussels had spread to Gavins Point and McCook Lake, followed by Lake Yankton in 2018. Lake Francis and Lake Sharpe were added to the list in 2019, signaling a growing pattern of spread.

That same year, the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission formally urged action, sending a letter to Governor Kristi Noem calling on her to "lead a statewide call to action of all stakeholders, public and private, to develop and implement a comprehensive response to the significant environmental, social, and economic threat presented by zebra mussels and other aquatic invasive species."

Commission members expressed concern that without coordinated, statewide intervention, South Dakota was heading down a dangerous path. In 2020, zebra mussels were detected in four popular northeastern South Dakota lakes.

That year, Governor Noem signed House Bill 1033 into law, which prohibited the transportation of invasive plants or animals within the state. GFP subsequently adopted the slogan "Slow the Spread," positioning itself as the primary agency tasked with protecting the state's waters.

The spread continued. Lake Mitchell was added to the infested list in 2021, and in 2022, five additional popular lakes tested positive for zebra mussels.

Legislative efforts to address the issue have faced challenges.

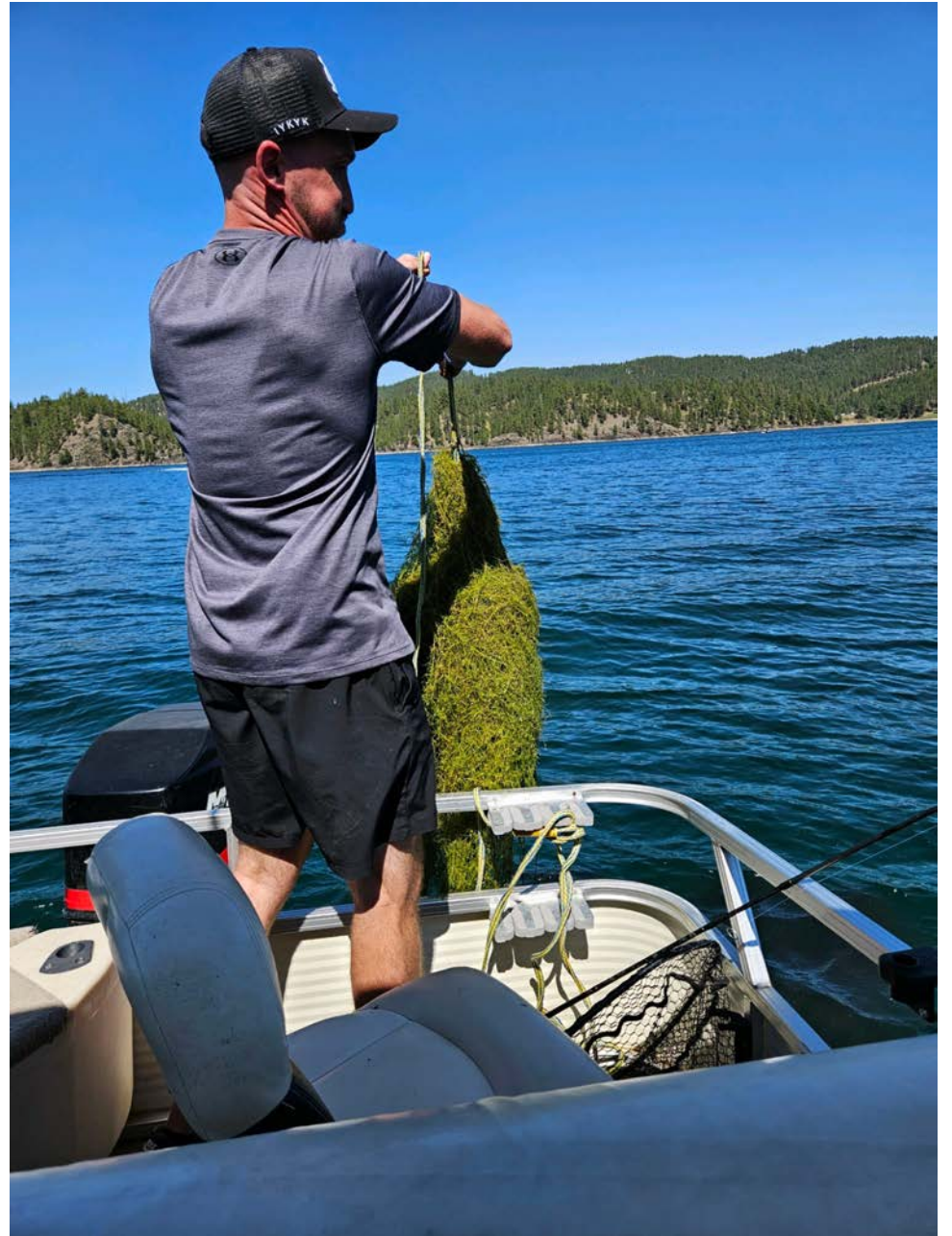
In 2022, Senator Michael Rohl sponsored Senate Concurrent Resolution 602 to establish a study group focused on the infestation. The resolution failed after GFP testified against it at multiple hearings, despite both legislative chambers issuing a proclamation directing GFP to use all available resources to stop the spread.

That same year, the South Dakota Lakes and Streams Association worked with Senator V.J. Smith to pursue a special legislative appropriation of approximately \$62,500 to purchase five boat-cleaning stations for use at inspection sites.

That proposal was also defeated. Shortly thereafter, private-sector partners offered to provide the cleaning stations at no cost. The association offered the equipment to GFP, which declined the offer.

As of 2025, zebra mussels have been confirmed in 32 South Dakota bodies of water, including all three major river systems. According to environmental researchers, zebra mussels filter water so effectively that lakes may appear clearer, creating a misleading perception of improved water quality. This filtration can contribute to increased aquatic vegetation growth, with weeds now appearing at depths of up to 14 feet in lakes where they previously did not exist.

Studies also show that lakes containing zebra mussels are more likely to produce fish with elevated mercury levels, particularly walleyes and perch. Elevated mercury exposure poses health risks, especially to unborn children, as maternal consumption of contaminated fish has been linked to illness and birth defects.



Infestations of zebra mussels also make water bodies more susceptible to infestations of other aquatic invasive species.

The South Dakota Lakes and Streams Association advocates that all lakes infested with zebra mussels should undergo mercury testing for walleye and perch populations, and that public advisories should be posted where elevated levels are detected.

The association has also undertaken a privately funded, \$100,000 study examining the economic impact of zebra mussels on South Dakota. The study is a collaboration among the University of South Dakota, the Dakota Institute, the University of Montana, and several South Dakota water districts. After more than two years of research, the study is expected to conclude in the near future.

Association leaders say the findings will provide a clearer picture of the long-term consequences Gov. Rounds warned about in 2008. They have also praised the 2019 GFP Commission for alerting the executive branch to the growing threat.

The organization plans to release the study results soon and intends to support legislation in the upcoming session calling for a nonpartisan meeting of public and private stakeholders to discuss the future of South Dakota's surface waters and propose solutions.

Supporters of the initiative argue that coordinated discussion is essential, noting that neighboring states such as Wyoming and Montana—despite operating on similar timelines—remain free of zebra mussels. They question why South Dakota has experienced widespread infestation while those states have not, and whether different policy approaches could alter the state's current trajectory.

For more information on South Dakota Lakes and Streams Association, please visit our website at: [www.sdlakesandstreams.org](http://www.sdlakesandstreams.org)



# Five years in, SD's Habitat Stamp praised as one of state's 'smartest investments' - By Joshua Haiar

## Mandatory fee has funded 1,300 projects for habitat, wildlife and outdoor recreation

### South Dakota Searchlight

The first fish that Republican former state Sen. V.J. Smith ever caught was from a dock when he was a young boy.

Today, dozens of new docks are available for kids to share that same thrill, thanks to funding Smith helped create.

South Dakota's Habitat Stamp fee has become a cornerstone in the state's strategy to improve wildlife habitat and expand public access for outdoor recreation since the stamp's inception five years ago.

"It's a small price to pay for the critters that were here long before we were," Smith said.

The stamp is a required extra purchase of \$10 for state residents and \$25 for non-residents when buying a hunting, trapping or fishing license. It was instituted by the state Legislature and sponsored by Smith, of Brookings, who described it as "an insurance policy for the future" of the state's outdoor heritage.

Every dollar of the stamp is required by law to go toward wildlife habitat and public access projects. The stamp has raised \$21.6 million in its first five years, and the state Department of Game, Fish and Parks has so far spent \$14 million on about 1,300 projects. The money is divided roughly equally between water and land-based efforts

The water projects have included rehabilitating aging dams, constructing and improving boat ramps and fishing piers, dredging and aerating lakes, and restoring habitats such as rock reefs and stream banks.

On land, the department focuses on seeding native grasses and wildflowers, planting trees and shrubs, improving access roads and trails, and supporting programs that compensate private landowners who open their land to public recreation.

#### The stamp's origins

After watching fellow lawmakers debate a one-time, \$1 million transfer to a habitat fund in 2019, Smith said he and others saw the need for a permanent, self-funded solution. Surrounding states already had habitat and conservation fees tied to license sales.

The next year, the stamp bill passed with bipartisan support.

"The legislation would never have passed without the endorsement of the outdoor groups," Smith said.

Smith said one of the key players was the Brookings area chapter of the South Dakota Wildlife Federation, including chapter member and retired state waterfowl biologist Spencer Vaa, who inspired Smith to introduce the bill.

"He enlightened me on the needs of wildlife and the importance of habitat," Smith said. "A lot of people deserve credit for this. You need a lot of people to get stuff done."

Jeff Olson, of the Black Hills Sportsmen Club and Black Hills Fly-fishers, said some hunters and anglers were initially skeptical of the stamp, and worried it might become "just another tax." But five years later, he said the results speak for themselves.

Olson pointed to Pactola Reservoir, a popular man-made lake in the Black Hills, and the stamp-funded work local anglers and the department have been doing to add fish habitat structures and improve shoreline access below the reservoir. He said the projects help to make Rapid Creek, which feeds the lake and runs through Rapid City, a prime fishing spot.

"We wouldn't have been able to do a lot of the recent fisheries projects we've gotten done, like the one below Pactola Reservoir, without those stamp dollars," Olson said.

Insurance policy for the future

Retired wildlife biologist George Vandel, who now lobbies in Pierre on behalf of the South Dakota Wildlife Federation, called the stamp "one of the smartest investments hunters and anglers have ever made."

Vandel said the fee pays for habitat and access improvements that would be "nearly impossible" to secure through South Dakota's Legislature, where "it's a fight" to secure funding.

Nevertheless, a few concerns remain. Vandel mentioned an exemption that allows shooting and preserve customers to avoid paying the fee. Those are privately owned and managed lands where pen-raised game birds (and sometimes other animals) are released to be shot by customers. He said that was a compromise made during the bill's passage, with preserves arguing they do not impact wildlife numbers. Vandel wants to apply the fee to preserves and bring in more revenue for Habitat Stamp projects.

Some western South Dakota hunters and anglers, including Olson, say investments have been more concentrated in the eastern part of the state. Of the \$14 million spent so far, \$4.5 million was spent in western counties.

Regardless, for outdoor enthusiasts, the narrative is clear: The annual fee provides a tangible return. As Vandel puts it, "The \$10 you spend is half a box of shells or a six pack of beer. This is a direct return on your investment. There's no administrative overhead, it's just money on the ground."

Vandel praised the stamp's results, from new boat ramps and shoreline access to grassland and food-plot restoration. He also pointed to the public access programs as essential to maintaining hunting opportunities.

"Sportsmen and women have to realize you get what you pay for, and if you want cheap, that's exactly what you'll end up with: less habitat, less access, and fewer game," Vandel said.

#### Where the money goes

South Dakota's Habitat Stamp has funded about 1,300 projects since the program began five years ago:

- ◆ 33.6 miles of new trails.
- ◆ 41 dams repaired.
- ◆ 3,000 acres of forest and grassland habitat enhancements.
- ◆ 41 fish-habitat structures built.
- ◆ 956 wildlife food plots created.
- ◆ 36 new docks and piers.
- ◆ 49 new boat ramps and launches.
- ◆ 5,000 acres of native prairie restored.
- ◆ 14.8 miles of wildlife-friendly fencing installed.
- ◆ 212,000 acres enrolled in public access to private land programs.



Former state Sen. V.J. Smith, a Republican from Brookings, holds up the "Legislator of the Year" award given to him by the South Dakota Wildlife Federation for his legislation that created the state's Habitat



## House Bill 1157

### The Urgent Need for Mussel Prevention in South Dakota

South Dakota Lakes & Streams Association commissioned a study estimating the economic costs to stakeholders from zebra mussel infestation. The full study will be available April 1. Some evidence of costs sustained by South Dakota facilities:

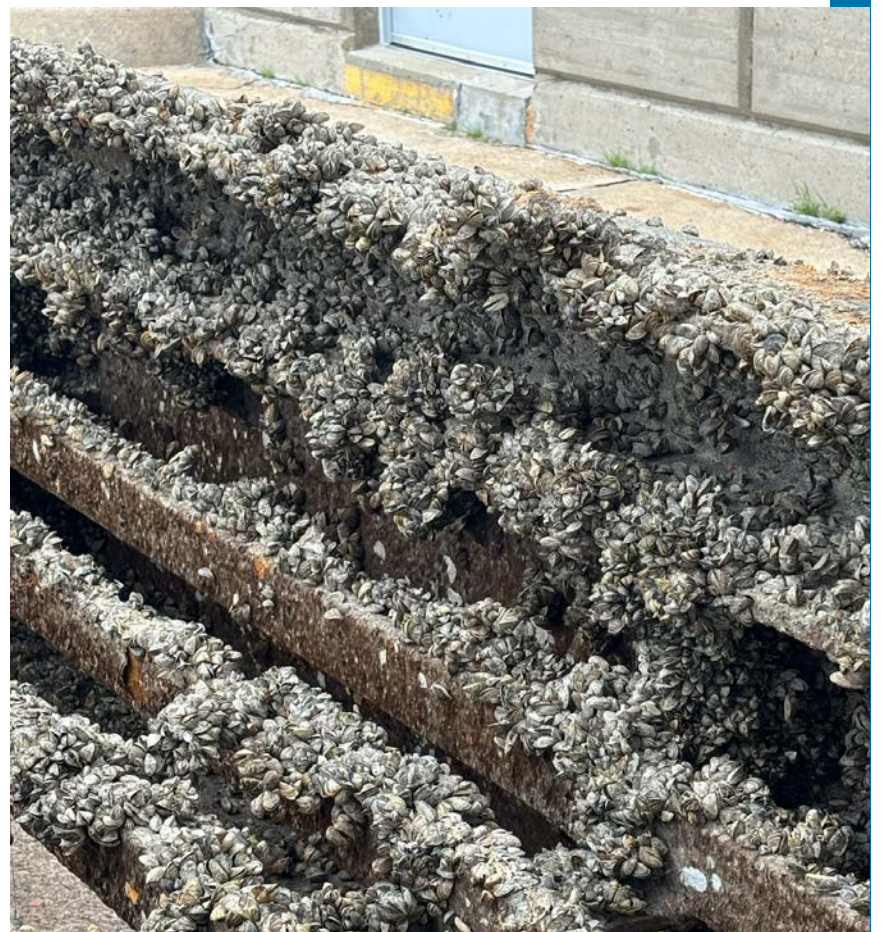
**Hydropower.** Three of the four Army Corp of Engineers hydropower facilities have collectively reported spending \$1.7 million since 2018 on technologies to prevent mussel colonization, \$360,000 in increased maintenance and chemical costs, \$65,000 in monitoring costs, and \$650,000 in lost power production at Gavins Point.

**Municipal Water Treatment.** WEB Water spent \$1.9 million in 2021 on a new, copper-coated intake screen and \$80,000 annually in maintenance costs. The Randall Community Water District reported investing \$145,000 in 2021 on a chemical injection system and needed retrofits; other costs included installing additional filters, antifouling coatings, modifications to existing equipment, and increased chemical costs.

**Golf Courses.** In 2025 Cattail Crossing Golf Course in Watertown, with water pulled from Lake Kampeska, spent \$25,000 on a new injector system, \$25,000 replacing zebra mussel plugged sprinkler heads, and projects \$5,000–\$7,000 in yearly costs to maintain the system. Lakeview Golf Course in Mitchell has invested \$55,000 in a new filtration system and will be purchasing a chemical injection system in 2026.

These initial costs represent only a fraction of what widespread infestation would demand. Actual costs rise rapidly with infestation spread and facility complexity. Once mussels colonize a major waterway, the burden expands beyond hydropower, utilities and agriculture—recreation, property values, and local tax revenues decline in tandem.

Agriculture is key to South Dakota's economy and culture. While irrigators have yet to experience widespread economic impacts, they have expressed serious concern about reduced pumping capacity and increased labor needs to clear sprinkler systems. Using cost estimates of \$1.85–\$2.78 per acre-ft, we estimate the range of potential economic impact to irrigators would be \$304,000–\$458,000 yearly, based on annual appropriation of surface water and probability of zebra mussel establishment given physical characteristics of the waterbody.



*Intake Trash Racks at Fort Randall (2024)*

Recreation is important to South Dakotans' quality of life and local economies. Marinas along the Missouri River have already reported fouling on docks and boats. Recreational and tournament fishing are important economic drivers for many lake and river communities in South Dakota. Zebra mussels negatively impact fish populations and are likely to reduce the number of viable fishing tournaments in the Glacial Lakes region of the state. We estimate that South Dakota could plausibly lose between four and seven fishing tournaments annually due to zebra mussel infestations. Local communities could lose \$590,000–1,080,000 in business activity if zebra mussel infestation lead to fewer fishing tournaments. The same communities would lose \$210,000–\$380,000 in personal income and \$16,000–\$28,000 in local sales tax revenue.



*Weed harvest at Lake Kampeska totaled 4,000 lbs (2024), all collected 100' from shoreline, at just one lake property.*

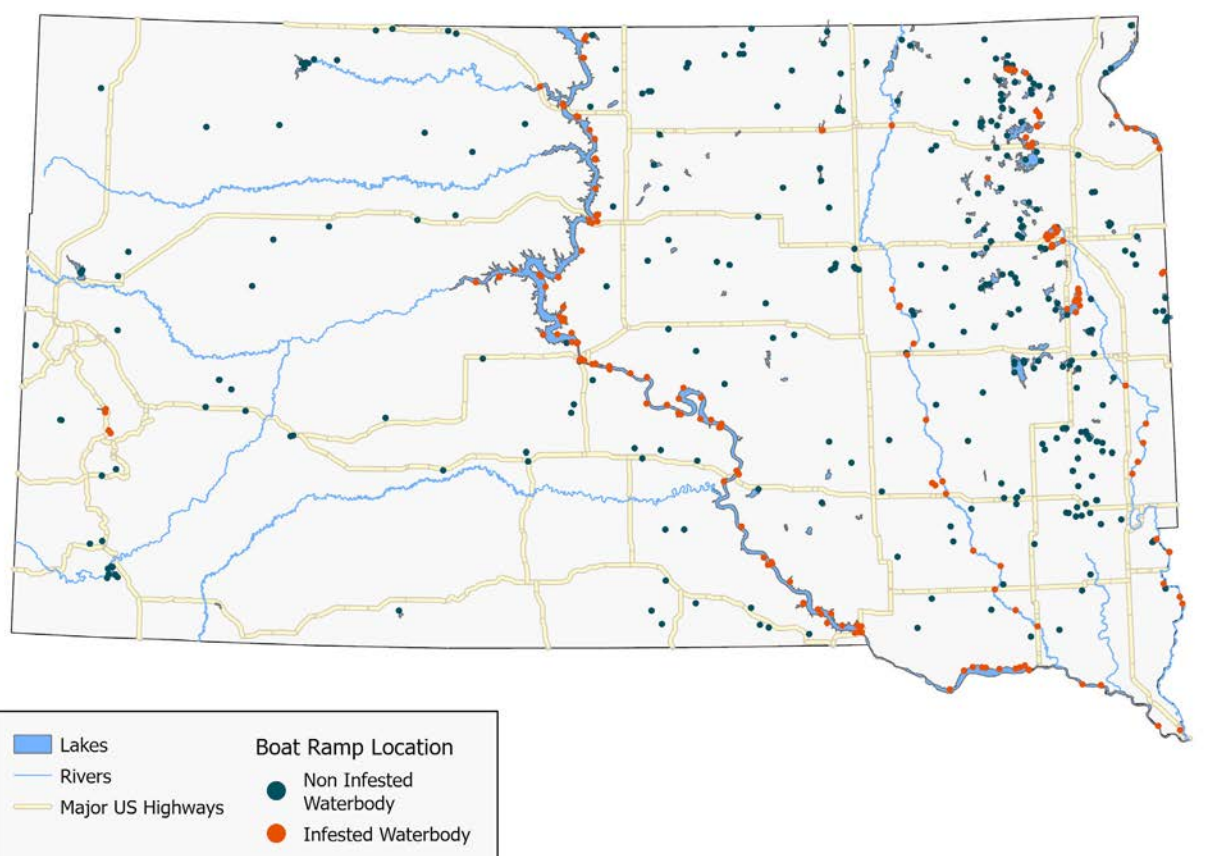


Fig. 1. Extent of water bodies susceptible to zebra mussel establishment based on boat ramp locations (vector of introduction) and physical factors favorable to zebra mussel survival (calcium and pH concentrations).



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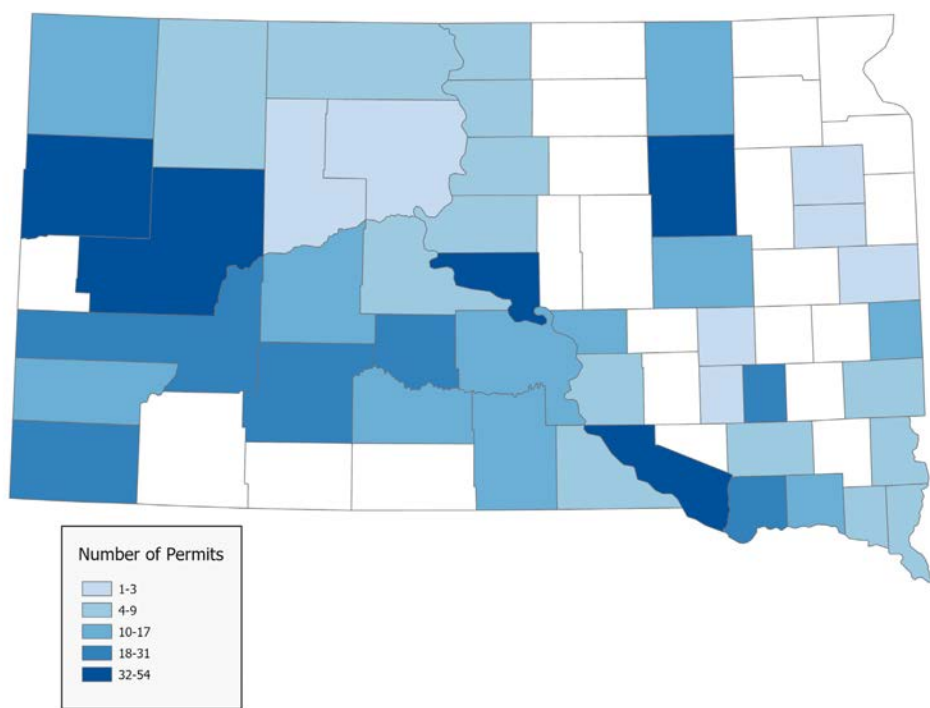


Fig. 2. Distribution of South Dakotan irrigators with surface water withdrawal permits that will be vulnerable to zebra mussel fouling and associated mitigation costs.

Preventing further spread is vastly more cost-effective than managing established infestations. Prevention costs are measured in thousands; containment and mitigation in millions. The state must therefore invest aggressively in watercraft inspection, rapid response capabilities, containment strategies, and continuous public education.

Every dollar spent today on prevention safeguards South Dakota's economic future. Inaction risks irreversible damage—to critical water supplies, regional industries, and the recreational resources that define our communities. Protecting South Dakota's waters from Dreissenid mussels is more than an environmental imperative—it is a defense of our economy, heritage, and way of life.

## Mentoring a new Deer hunter

by Maggie Lindsey - South Dakota Wildlife Federation board of Director

Prior to my retirement last May I worked in the R-3 field (Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation of anglers and hunters) For the past 20+ years. I was the South-Central Hunter Education Coordinator in Alaska then the Education Services Coordinator in Ft Pierre. I was involved from the ground floor of national discussions of best practices, the Outdoor Recreation Adoption Model, target audiences, GFP Education Plan, and what works and what doesn't. Both jobs were a perfect fit for me as I had been practicing R-3 my whole life starting as a teenager taking along siblings, friends and neighbors teaching them how to fish, and hunt. I was one of the lucky ones as in early childhood my father started taking me hunting (I was his dove retriever starting at age 4) and teaching me to fish, instilling a life-long passion.

When I first arrived in South Dakota I rekindled my passion for deer hunting, which I had missed for the past 30 years in Alaska. Knowing I loved to deer hunt I was asked by a neighbor to mentor her young daughter who was interested in learning to deer hunt as well as an adult lady friend of mine. I worked with both of them and each ended up harvesting a deer, but both wounded the animals that had to be tracked and dispatched. I struggled with that ethically having prided myself on not letting an animal suffer and working hard to always pick my shot and make a clean kill. After that experience I made the decision not to mentor large game again – that was 14 years ago.

I gladly mentored supported hunt of pheasants and waterfowl, but for some reason the memory of those suffering deer haunted me. This summer we formed a small dog training group for bird dogs and one of the gentlemen that was a lead trainer asked me if I would mentor him on a deer hunt as he wanted to learn how to hunt big game. Dan Kim is an avid pheasant and waterfowl hunter so after telling him my ethical dilemma I decided I would take him out. He did his homework, learning shot placement, visiting the range frequently and becoming proficient with his rifle. I secured a place to hunt and in early December we went on our first hunt.

Though we didn't expect success on our first hunt, we set up in a good spot and prepared to sit and wait the whole day. Dan asked all the right questions, made a few mistakes such as moving around too much spooking several groups of deer that came in early, but a half hour before sunset a doe stepped out at 40 yards and he made a quick, beautiful kill shot. Dan was ecstatic, and when he approached the doe, I taught him to thank her for giving herself to him which I had learned from the Inupiat people I hunted with in Arctic Alaska. I taught him how to field dress the doe, pack her on a sled and pack her to the vehicle and load her up. On the two-hour drive home, we happily relived the hunt over and over, something that hunters

do. Dan is also a gourmet cook making amazing meals from pheasant and duck, but now he talked about what he planned to prepare. We hung his deer for several days then I taught him how to cut her up. It was then that he presented me with a gorgeous Hank Shaw cookbook "Buck, Buck, Moose".

I have to say I thoroughly enjoyed mentoring this time as everything fell together and my student put his work into it. I was happy that I was not only able to teach

about hunting but pass on some of my ethics. We are already talking about where to put in for permits next year. This hunt would not have been possible without the GFP Apprentice deer license where an adult new hunter or someone that had not had a license for the past 10 years can get a doe license for \$5. This is a very successful recruitment tool to bring in new hunters as they can go on a hunt after attending a class or have a mentor. This special license was the idea of Jan Loux who had attended our Becoming an Outdoor Woman (BOW) deer hunting class, became an avid deer hunter, then started teaching deer hunting. Jan called me from the deer stand with an "idea" of how we could take these enthusiastic women on an actual deer hunt while they were still fired up from the class. I directed her how to start the process of presenting it. From there it was re-worked, ran through the proper process and was adopted. The Apprentice license gave the opportunity to individuals that want to hunt deer for the first time and opened the door for both the GFP Outdoor Campuses to offer learn to hunt classes and take students on an actual hunt.

There was another unique thing about Dan – in the R-3 world he is classified as the Adult-Onset Hunter. This is an adult that has an interest in learning how to hunt. In the past recruitment focused primarily on youngsters but we learned that adults are interested in learning how to hunt too. We offered Becoming an Outdoor Woman (BOW) classes for adult women which has proved to be a very successful program but what about adult men? While working in Alaska, I would get calls from men usually military who were stationed in Alaska and wanted to experience all Alaska had to offer – hunting and fishing. Most had grown up in urban areas with no exposure to the outdoors and didn't know where to start. I had nothing to offer them except BOW. A few brave men took those classes and loved them. I am so proud of South Dakota Game Fish and Parks as they offer learn to hunt programs to both adult men and women.





SOUTH DAKOTA WILDLIFE FEDERATION GIFT MEMBERSHIP

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Pierre, SD 57501

SD WILDLIFE FEDERATION LEGACY DONORS FROM APRIL 2024 – JANUARY 2026

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.

29-90 Sportsman’s Club Scholarship



Emmett Keyser presenting the 29-90 Sportsman’s Club Scholarship check to SDSU Department of Natural Resources Management student Lily Geffre at the Department’s Annual Undergraduate Award and Scholarship Reception that took place at McCrory Gardens on the SDSU Campus on October 29th this last fall. Lily is from Sioux Falls and is majoring in Ecology and Environmental Science and Biology at South Dakota State University in Brookings.

APRIL 2024 – JANUARY 2026	APRIL 2024 – JANUARY 2026	APRIL 2024 – JANUARY 2026
<b>LEVEL V EAGLE</b> ELMEN FAMILY FOUNDATION - SD EMMETT KEYSER - SD 29-90 SPORTSMAN'S CLUB - SD BEADLE CO SPORTSMAN CLUB - SD BLACK HILLS SPORTSMEN - SD BRAD JOHNSON - SD BROOKINGS WILDLIFE FEDERATION - SD CAROL JOHNSON - SD CRAIG CHRISTIANSON - SD DAKOTA SPORTSMAN INC - SD DANA & MICHELE ROGERS - SD GREAT PLAINS OUTDOORSMEN - SD HAROLD MANSHEIM – SD JONES COUNTY SPORTSMAN'S CLUB - SD MILT CARTER - SD NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION - VA SOUTH DAKOTA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION SPORTSMAN'S CLUB OF BROWN CO - SD YANKTON AREA PHEASANTS FOREVER - SD	<b>LEVEL III ELK</b> TERRY & LAREE MAYES - SD BIG SIOUX APPRAISALS - SD BLACK HILLS FLY FISHERS - SD DAN LIMMER – SD DICK & SUE BROWN - SD JAMES FREDRIKSON - SD JEFF OLSON - SD LAKE CAMPBELL WILDLIFE - SD RICHARD MILLER - SD STEVE BERBERICH – SD	<b>LEVEL I PHEASANT</b> ARLO LEVISEN - SD BARRY JOHNSON – SD CHUCK LEBEDA - SD CHUCK SHERMAN - SD DAVID HOWARD - SD DAVID JACOBSON - SD DICK & SUE BROWN - SD DON LEPP - SD DUSTY MILLER - SD EVERETT HOYT - SD FORREST FLINT - MN GEORGE VANDEL – SD GRADY JOLLEY - SD HERB WISWALL - SD JAMES EIDSVOLD - SD JEFF CLOW - SD JEFF KETTER - WI JIM BARNETT - SD JIM HUMMEL - SD JIM LEMONDS – SD JOHN SIMPSON - SD KENDALL BURNS – CO LARRY DENISON – VA LARRY HAMRE - SD LARRY KALLEMEYN – SD LARRY MILLER - SD LARRY O'RILEY TRUST - MO MICHAEL DOUGLAS - CA MICHAEL ROMANS - SD MYRON WACHENDORF MEMORIAL - SD RON SCHAUER - SD SCOTT DOMKE – SD SCOTT PICKER - WI STEPHEN EGGER TIM BJORK - SD WARREN JACKSON - SD
<b>LEVEL IV BUFFALO</b> CODY WARNER – SD HERBERT WISWALL - SD JERRY SOHOLT – SD NIK LIPP - SD BLACK HILLS SPORTSMEN - SD CHUCK AND GINGER SCALET - KS HECLA COMMUNITY SPORTSMEN - SD HIGH PLAINS WILDLIFE ASSOCIATION - SD JEFF OLSON – SD JOHN COOPER - SD MARLING STAMMER – SD SE SD QUALITY DEER - SD WHETSTONE SPORTSMEN - SD	<b>LEVEL II DEER</b> ARLO LEVISEN - SD CHUCK DIETER – SD BILL CLAYTON - SD CHARLIE ROKUSEK - SD DON BARTHOLOMEW – AZ FRED WHITING – SD GERALD WICKSTROM - SD GRASS LAKE CONSERVATION - SD HERBERT WISWALL - SD JAY'S BODY SHOP - SD JERAULD CO FISH AND GAME - SD JOHN PRANGER – SD LYNN D BENNETT - SD MIKE DOUGLAS - SD PHEASANTS FOREVER Inc – MINNEHAHA CHAP. #73 - SD	
	<b>LEVEL I PHEASANT</b> DUANE DIVICH – TX CURT BISGARD – SD JEFF SOHOLT - SD SCOTT WEHRKAMP - SD THOMAS TIEDEMANN - SD BOB BROWN – SD HARRY CHAPMAN – SD ANDREW O'CONNEL – MN	





# Brookings Wildlife Federation Year in Review 2025: January – July

## Chuck Berry, Brookings Wildlife Federation

### December Infolunch Review: Conservation on Private Lands

The Brookings Wildlife Federation hosted Mr. Will Gallman, a Private Lands Biologist with the SD Game, Fish and Parks. Gallman talked about voluntary conservation programs that GFP and other organizations offer to landowners in the area. Gallman works on habitat improvement and public access. South Dakota is 80% privately-owned, so landowners play a significant role in providing wildlife habitat and outdoor opportunities like hunting and fishing. For more about the GFP habitat programs visit. <https://habitat.sd.gov/>. The Habitat Stamp has helped.



Lunch line hosted by Linda Vaa, free will offering helps cover room rent for Infolunch meeting.

Typical attendance at Infolunch is 30 – 40 people; meetings are open to the public.



In 2025, we met regularly for our monthly educational session and occasional short business meeting called Infolunch at the Outdoor Adventure Center, 2810 22nd Ave South. The BWF members stay connected through our Newsletter that goes to about 150 people through email and snail mail. The Brookings Register and Radio KBRK covered our Infolunch meetings as a public service – we hope to raise public awareness about the BWF and wildlife conservation issues.

The Newsletter announces Infolunch speakers, BWF activities like highway clean-up, raffles, donations and awards, news from SDWF, NWF, and State and Federal agencies, history, essays, and outdoor stories. New this year was a monthly column by an SDSU graduate student about research results and student activities. Following is a summary of the first six months of Infolunch topics and Newsletter articles.

January: Infolunch: Legislative Session with Senator Tim Reed

**Newsletter:** history of jackrabbit drives and modern population surveys; GFP Secretary article in the Brookings Register about #1 priority – habitat development. He patted us on the back saying “Hunting is the truest form of conservation, so hunters are our greatest conservationists.”



### February: Infolunch: Brown Bear Hunt by Curt Ness

Newsletter: More about Jackrabbits from Chuck Cecil with data from the old Gednalske Hide and Fur Company; SDWF Lobbyists Dana Rogers and George VanDel track proposed legislation; 18 bills about wildlife introduced.



Newsletter: update on wildlife bills in the legislature: SDWF sponsored bill was about licenses for hunting guides; BWF donated \$1000 to Camo Coalition (our lobby group); SDWF history review; Lake Campbell Ice Derby results (107 anglers, biggest fish 8 lb. northern); Great Back Yard Bird Count Results [citizen science] for Brookings (17 species); introducing the Midwest Walleye Challenge [citizen science]; First reports on new Federal government administration conservation policy changes – anticipate reduced staff and funding.

### April Infolunch Paddlefish by SDSU student Logan Zebro.

Newsletter: history of Earth Day; more about Midwest Walleye Challenge; unusual ice cover on Lake Campbell (ice lasted 108 days); NWF invites us to virtual briefing on wildlife policies of new administration.



### May Infolunch GFP biologists discuss fishing prospects

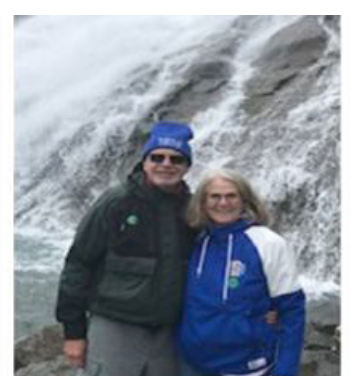
Newsletter: Restating the BIG 3: Pub-



lic Trust Doctrine, North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, National Environmental Policy; pollution in Big Sioux River; downsizing federal government and change in wetland conservation; listing of NWF conservation advisors/staff on national politics

### June Infolunch: Alaska Adventure by Ven Lengkeek – sightseeing, fishing,

Newsletter: Trout Extravaganza canceled, SD goals for wetlands and rivers reviewed; Walleye Challenge [a citizen science project] halftime report (102 participating anglers and 1000+ fish, biggest 29-inch). SDWF Convention report; AIS (aquatic invasive species) reminder; USGS downsizing; BWF road cleanup public service





2026 South Dakota Wildlife Federation’s  
\$3000 Cash Raffle

\$15 each or 4 for \$50



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2026 SDWF \$3,000 Cash Raffle

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2026 SDWF \$3,000 Cash Raffle

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2026 SDWF \$3,000 Cash Raffle

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2026 SDWF \$3,000 Cash Raffle

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2026 South Dakota Wildlife Federation’s  
PHEASANT HUNT

\$25 each or 4 for \$90



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2026 SDWF PHEASANT HUNT

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2026 SDWF PHEASANT HUNT

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2026 SDWF PHEASANT HUNT

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2026 SDWF PHEASANT HUNT

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Address \_\_\_\_\_  
  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_

2026 South Dakota Wildlife Federation’s  
21 GUN GIVEAWAY

\$25 each or 4 for \$90

- ♦ 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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2026 SDWF 21 Gun Giveaway Ticket

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Address \_\_\_\_\_  
  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_

2026 SDWF 21 Gun Giveaway Ticket

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2026 SDWF 21 Gun Giveaway Ticket

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2026 SDWF 21 Gun Giveaway Ticket

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_

1 Cash Raffle @ \$15 .....	Total \$ _____
4 Cash Raffle @ \$50 .....	Total \$ _____
1 Pheasant Hunt @ \$25.....	Total \$ _____
4 Pheasant Hunt @ \$90.....	Total \$ _____
1 21 Gun Giveaway @ \$25.....	Total \$ _____
4 21 Gun Giveaway @ \$90.....	Total \$ _____
Grand Total .....	Total \$ _____