

# Mountain Lion Harvest Could Be Smaller In ‘16

BY BOB MERCER  
State Capitol Bureau

The state Wildlife Division wants to make several significant changes for the 2016 hunting season for mountain lions in South Dakota.

The division’s biologists will outline their proposals during the state Game, Fish and Parks Commission meeting in Aberdeen today and Friday.

One recommended change would reduce the harvest limit.

The limits for the 2014 and 2015 seasons in the Black Hills were 75 lions overall or 50 females, whichever was reached first.

Hunters reported killing 21 males and 22 females during the 2015 season.

The 2014 season saw hunters take 22 males and 31 females.

The recommendation at this point for the 2016 season is 60 lions overall or 40 females.

The total of 43 lions killed in the 2015 season was the fewest in the past five years. There were 47 in 2011, followed by 73 in 2012 and 61 in 2013.

The other change that is recommended would set aside some lion licenses for non-residents for the first time.

During the past 10 years only South Dakota residents could buy licenses.

The current recommendation would allow 250 licenses for non-residents. The price would be \$121. There isn’t a cap on licenses for South Dakota hunt-

ers, although they are restricted to one lion per year. The resident license fee is \$28.

Other changes being offered for 2016 would somewhat reduce the special Custer State Park hunts.

The commission will decide this week on a final proposal. The commission meets at the Americlnn conference center, 301 Centennial St. in Aberdeen, starting at 1 p.m. CT today and continuing Friday at approximately 8 a.m. CT.

A public hearing on the commission’s formal proposal for the lion season will be held during the commission’s next meeting on Thursday, Oct. 1, at 2 p.m. MT at the Spearfish/Holiday Inn Convention Center.

## Services For SD Firefighter Killed In California

RAPID CITY (AP) — A Rapid City firefighter and avid outdoorsman who died fighting a wildfire in California will be honored in a procession, memorial service and funeral in South Dakota starting this weekend.

David Ruhl, 38, was on temporary assignment with the Big Valley Ranger District of the Modoc National Forest when he went missing Thursday in hazardous fire conditions. His body was found a day later. The U.S. Forest Service said he died

of carbon monoxide poisoning and smoke inhalation.

A procession and memorial service are scheduled Sunday afternoon in Rapid City. His funeral is Monday morning at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Rapid City. Gov. Dennis Daugaard has ordered flags in South Dakota be flown at half-staff on Monday in Ruhl’s honor.

Ruhl is survived by his wife, Erin, and two children. Erin Ruhl said in a statement that her husband “loved to

hunt, ski, bike and hike and the Forest Service fit him to a T.”

“He made lasting friends from all over and had an awesome sense of humor,” she said.

In South Dakota, Ruhl was the engine captain on the Mystic Ranger District of the Black Hills National Forest. He previously had worked in the Pierre area.

“He was definitely passionate about being a firefighter and being a good firefighter,” said Ryan Cum-

bow, engine captain for the firefighting crew assigned to the Fort Pierre National Grassland and Ruhl’s former supervisor when Ruhl worked on that crew.

“I always thought Dave was easy to train, and he picked up on things very quickly,” Cumbow told the *Rapid City Journal*. “He always watched out for everybody. He was always cognizant of what was happening around him.”

## Labor Grievance Filed Over Work Hours At NE Prison

BY GRANT SCHULTE  
Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — Nearly three months after a deadly Nebraska prison riot, corrections officers and caseworkers are still working 12-hour emergency shifts at the facility, a state union official said Wednesday.

The union filed a complaint July 29 against the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services, accusing administrators of violating a state labor contract by refusing to negotiate the longer shifts, which were imposed after an inmate revolt at the Tecumseh State Correctional Institution in southeast Nebraska. Prison employees usually work eight-hour shifts.

“We maintain that they need to sit down and negotiate how they’re going to

do this,” said Mike Marvin, executive director of the Nebraska Association of Public Employees.

The contract allows administrators to change employee schedules during an emergency, but Marvin said the continued shifts should be subject to negotiation.

Two inmates died in the May 10 riot, which left two guards and four inmates injured. An investigative report released in June concluded that the riot started after too many prisoners were allowed to leave their cells at once to get medication while the prison was at minimum staffing levels. Staff members lost control of the situation in less than 20 minutes.

The prison has remained on lockdown ever since, with restrictions on inmate movement and 12-hour work shifts for officers and caseworkers.

The emergency shifts were initially required five days a week, but were reduced to four in late May.

The Nebraska Association of Public Employees allowed the 12-hour shifts to continue for several weeks because the prison needed to address the emergency, according to the union’s executive director, Mike Marvin. Marvin raised concerns about the shifts in a June 1 email to corrections director Scott Frakes and met with him the following day, according to the complaint.

Marvin said he sent Frakes a union proposal for the shifts in mid-June, but it was rejected. Marvin said Frakes, who has promised to work with employees to improve the department’s work culture, told him the department needed more time to hire employees at

the Tecumseh prison to ease a staffing shortage. That facility has the highest employee turnover rate within the state prison system, and officers on average are less experienced.

Marvin said the union isn’t asking the department to revert back to eight-hour shifts immediately, but to negotiate when the longer shifts start and stop and when prison employees receive their third day off each week. The longer shifts were also imposed without taking seniority into account, he said.

The complaint was filed with the Nebraska Commission of Industrial Relations, which rules on state labor disputes.

Corrections spokesman James Foster said the department doesn’t comment on legal

### Traffic Stop Nets 6 Pounds Of Heroin

SPEARFISH (AP) — A weekend traffic stop on Interstate 90 in western South Dakota yielded 6 pounds of heroin.

Lawrence County State’s Attorney John Fitzgerald tells the Black Hills Pioneer that a Highway Patrol officer stopped the vehicle from Washington state on Saturday near Spearfish.

Authorities are pursuing drug charges against two men from Washington and a woman from Arizona.

### County Gets New Vote Counter

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — Minnehaha County commissioners have decided to use more than \$109,000 in federal election money to buy a third digital vote tabulator.

The *Argus Leader* reports that the additional machine meets a recommendation from an election review committee. The group formed after it took county election officials 14 hours to count votes after the polls closed during last year’s November election.

Auditor Bob Litz says the new machine should arrive next month, providing ample time to get it ready for the April 2016 city and school district elections, and the next presidential election.

Election review committee member Sue Roust says having a third machine ensures that if one starts rejecting ballots like it did last year, another is available.

### Passenger Used Stun Gun On Driver

NEBRASKA CITY, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska authorities say a Missouri woman was cited for assault after using a stun gun on the driver of the vehicle in which they were traveling.

Nebraska City station KNCY reports that 41-year-old Jolie Hoefling (HOH’-fling) was treated for minor injuries after the incident.

It’s unclear whether Hoefling has an attorney who could comment on her behalf.

Otoe County Sheriff James Gress told The Associated Press on Wednesday that Hoefling and 46-year-old Miles Sprague, also of Lexington, Missouri, were arguing on July 18 as they drove west on the Nebraska-Iowa Highway 2 bridge. Reports say Hoefling then pulled out a stun gun and shot Sprague. The SUV struck a concrete barrier and eventually rolled over into a ditch on the Nebraska side.

Gress says Sprague refused to be hospitalized.

### Fire Damages Gas Station In Mobridge

MOBRIDGE (AP) — Authorities are investigating the cause of a fire at a gas station in Mobridge.

Fire Chief Mitchel Voller tells the American News that the blaze at the Holiday gas station occurred about 12:30 a.m. Monday. He says it is not considered suspicious.

No one was hurt in the fire, but Voller says the business has extensive damage and likely will be closed for a while.

### Man Pleads Not Guilty To Killing Girl

RAPID CITY (AP) — A Rapid City man accused of killing a 6-month-old girl has pleaded not guilty.

Twenty-six-year-old Kristopher Houchin faces a second-degree murder charge in the June 26 death of L’Naya White. Preliminary autopsy results indicated she died from brain bleeding as a result of blunt force trauma.

Police say Houchin was baby-sitting the girl. He initially also faced rape and child abuse charges, but authorities said those charges were not supported by the autopsy.

Houchin could face life in prison if convicted of murder.

### Woman Gets Probation In Death Case

FREMONT, Neb. (AP) — A Fremont woman has been given 12 months of probation for helping to supply booze that contributed to the death of her teenage brother.

The *Fremont Tribune* reports that 19-year-old Yesenia “Izzy” Valdez was sentenced on Tuesday. She’d pleaded no contest and was convicted of a misdemeanor: procuring alcohol for a minor. The charge was reduced from a felony and an unrelated shoplifting case was dismissed in exchange for Valdez’s plea.

Police say Valdez helped 21-year-old Dakota McDonald provide alcohol to Valdez’s 16-year-old brother, Jaime (HEYE’-may) Valdez. Jaime Valdez was found outside the morning of Nov. 16, when, according to the National Weather Service, Fremont’s temperature was 2 degrees, with a wind chill of minus 16.

McDonald has been sentenced to 30 months of probation.

## Police Chief To Retire This Fall

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — The second-longest serving police chief in Sioux Falls history announced Wednesday he will retire this fall after almost 30 years on the force.

Chief Doug Barthel, 52, joined Mayor Mike Huether at the Sioux Falls Police Department to announce he will step down in to October take a position as director of community relations and public policy for Sanford’s health care system.

Barthel said deciding to leave was “extremely difficult.”

“It’s been an incredible career,” he said. “I’ve been blessed with some fantastic opportunities.”

Barthel began with the department in 1986 and former Mayor Dave Munson appointed Barthel as chief in May 2003. At the time of his appointment, Barthel was 40 and a lieutenant who had supervised the department’s drug task force.

Barthel became chief at a time when Sioux Falls police leadership was changing. His predecessor, Clark Quiring, was demoted, freeing up the police chief position.

His last day in the department will be Oct. 16, he said, adding that he will take several weeks to relax, and hunt pheasants, before he joins Sanford in December.

The city will immediately begin searching for Barthel’s replacement, Huether said.

Barthel noted in his press conference that is his only wish was that during his tenure he could say the city had won the “war on drugs.”

“I always wanted to be able to say that,” he said, “but other than that it’s just been a great career.”



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