

GFP Acquiring Land Again After Moratorium Lifted

BY BOB MERCER
State Capitol Bureau

SYLVAN LAKE — Acquisition of two parcels of land in Clark and Moody counties received approval Friday from the state Game, Fish and Parks Commission.

The Clark County purchase covers 5.16 acres of old railroad route owned by Gregerson Salvage of Waubay. The price is \$7,740. The land is an inholding within the existing Lynbe game production area.

The Moody County purchase is approximately 160 acres owned by James Van Hecke and Carol Van Hecke near Colman. The price is \$160,000. The land will be used for a game production area.

Negotiations are underway toward buying 153 acres in Kingsbury County. The land provides access to Twin Lakes, according to Paul Coughlin, who oversees land acquisitions for the Game, Fish and Parks Department.

"This is really kind of a priority for us because those Highway 81 ponds are such a resource," he said.

Coughlin said he's working on getting back into contact again with landowners who had previously expressed interest in making their property available to GFP, now that Gov. Dennis Daugaard has lifted his moratorium on most GFP land purchases.

• **ARCHERY:** Hunters would be limited to no more than three archery deer licenses for the 2014 season under the proposal made Friday by the commission. The limit has been five.

To get three licenses, hunters would need an East River license, a West River license and one antlerless-only whitetail license.

All archery licenses would be single tag. A public hearing will be held June 5 at the commission's next meeting at Yankton.

Archery hunters harvested 7,277 deer in 2013. That was the smallest number in

at least five years. The recent high was 9,930 in 2010.

• **MUZZLELOADER:** The proposed Dec. 1 through Jan. 15 season for muzzleloader users would see changes similar to the archery proposal.

The any-deer muzzleloader licenses would remain at 1,000. There would be unlimited antlerless-only whitetail licenses. Last year there were unlimited antlerless any-deer licenses.

There also would be a limit of two total muzzleloader licenses per hunter, with a limit of one antlerless-only whitetail license per hunter.

The proposal gets a public hearing June 5 at Yankton.

There were 1,346 deer taken by muzzleloader hunters in 2013. That was a five-year low. The recent peak was 2,988 in 2010.

• **YOUTH DEER HUNTERS:** The main change recommended for the youth deer hunting season calls for allowing one antlerless-only any-deer license per hunter. The proposal goes to public hearing June 5.

In 2013, youth hunters took 2,507 deer. That was the lowest in at least five years. The recent high was 3,831 in 2010.

• **EVENT CENTER:** Steve and DeeAnn Rounds, who operate the Oahe Tailrace concession below the dam upstream from Pierre and Fort Pierre, want to construct a permanent addition to host larger events.

A 32 X 60 structure is planned on the rear of the existing restaurant and store building. There also would be a small concession booth. The addition would have a slab concrete floor. The estimated cost is \$40,000.

The deal calls for Rounds to clean up some other structures and put equipment and furniture behind an enclosure before the addition could be built.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers also would need to grant approval. The corps

leases the property to GFP and in turn it's leased to Rounds.

A new parking area would be added too. Large groups attending events would need to obtain park entrance permits. Restaurant users would continue to be unofficially exempt.

• **BERETTA LETTER:** The commission voted Friday to send a letter notifying Beretta USA about Scott Robertson, who hosts a TV outdoors show sponsored by the company.

The letter expresses the commission's concern about the ethical and legal violations committed in South Dakota regarding illegal deer taken by Robertson and his wife, Wendy, in 2008 and 2009.

The violations were part of a broader investigation that led to state and federal convictions of others in the Rock Creek Ranch case in Todd County. The many violations took place over a five-year period.

Robertson hosts a program called Beretta's Wild and Raw. John Cooper of Pierre, the commission's chairman, signed the letter to Beretta.

"Mr. Robertson's actions demonstrate a total and complete disregard for the wildlife laws in South Dakota," the two-page letter says.

• **BRIEFLY:** The Parks and Recreation Division's new regional manager for the northeast is Katie Ceroll. She's been the Fort Sisseton district park manager and has a strong background in interpretative management. Ceroll succeeds Harley Noem. Six internal GFP candidates interviewed for the appointment.

Regional wildlife supervisor Arden Petersen of Sioux Falls is retiring after 33 years with GFP.

The state Wildlife Division decided against conducting an aerial survey of the antelope population this spring. The 2014 season proposal will be recommended at the June commission meeting.

GFP: '13 Pheasant Harvest Assessed

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SYLVAN LAKE — The 2013 pheasant hunting season last fall held true to the projection that bird numbers would be down, but the results didn't turn out nearly as bad as the August forecast indicated they might be, a state Wildlife Division biologist said Friday.

Travis Runia said hunters harvested an estimated 982,000 pheasants during the 2013 season. It was the first time under 1 million since 1997, he said. The 2012 estimated harvest was 1.4 million birds.

"It's been a tough series of years," Runia told members of the state Game, Fish and Parks Commission.

Hunters declined 19 percent, or 31,000 from the 2012 total of about 163,000 licensed hunters. The average 2013 harvest was 7.4 birds per hunter, down 17 percent from 2012, and the lowest since 1989.

The post-season population estimate came in at about 6 million pheasants. That was down about 20 percent from the 7.6 million estimated after the 2012 season.

The ratio of roosters to hens was 60 to 100 after the season. Runia said that is the highest in modern time.

If the 31,000 missing hunters had been in the field, the ratio would be at about 50 to 100, Runia said. He said that's still a high ratio.

Generally the August forecasts swing farther in either direction than the harvests do. "We've seen this trend over and over," Runia said.

The 2013 forecast was pheasant numbers were off 64 percent, based on the August roadside surveys conducted by wildlife biologists.

"We finally got a piece of information that suggests our dismal forecast last fall might not have been that bad," Runia said.

Nebraska Youth Range Camp Set For June 9-13

HALSEY, Neb. — Students age 14-18 interested in learning about the outdoors are encouraged to attend the 51st Nebraska Youth Range Camp that will be held June 9-13 at the Nebraska State 4-H Camp in Halsey.

The Nebraska Youth Range Camp consists of a 4 1/2-day dynamic curriculum that appeals to students with a wide array of interests including, but not limited to, rangeland management, conservation, ecology, animal science and wildlife. With 50 years to perfect and evolve this curriculum, every student, no matter what prior experience they have, will learn substantial information that will help them become more aware of Nebraska's most prevalent land-use. Rangelands cover nearly 50 percent of Nebraska and approximately 60 percent of the United States. These numbers convey the dominance of this landuse, but recently there have been several political issues regarding the management of these rangelands. This further emphasizes the reason it is important to educate the youth so we may enable them to become proficient and effective leaders

in resource management as well as educated voters.

The students that attend Range Camp will be actively involved with field activities, lectures, hand-on experience and recreational leadership and team-building activities that are all led by up to 20 of Nebraska's most respected and dedicated leaders, teachers and professionals from various agencies, colleges and universities. Each student will be sent home with new friends, fun memories, a binder that is filled with educational materials and a T-shirt.

Applications need to be submitted by May 26. Attendance is capped at 65 students; individuals will be selected on a first come first served basis. Range Camp is an event that is made possible through the Nebraska Section of the Society for Range Management with assistance from several Nebraska ranches, the Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition, the Sandhills Task Force, several of Nebraska's Natural Resource Districts, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension Service and many volunteers.

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Coverage Area	Line of sight or near line of sight to access points	Highly dependent on coverage area and tower location	Affected by weather, low availability, overloaded network
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Download Limits?	NO DATA LIMITS	YES (2G/5G/10G Plans)	YES (6G/10G/20G Plans)
Service Area Coverage	Yankton SD and NE Areas	Yankton SD and NE Areas	Yankton SD and NE Areas
Price	Plans starting at \$59.95/mo.	Plans start at \$50.00/mo. for data plans with limits as part of voice/data bundles	Plans start at \$60.00/mo.
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