

Panel Rejects Petition On Trapping Rules

PIERRE (AP) — The Game, Fish and Parks Commission rejected a petition Thursday to relax some trapping regulations in the state.

Commissioners voted unanimously by teleconference to maintain the three rules disputed in a petition from Brian Reynolds, an outspoken outdoorsman and trapper who died unexpectedly earlier this month.

One contested rule requires trappers to remove snares and traps by May 1 annually. Another prohibits setting a trap within 30 feet of water from October 1 through the start of the mink season.

Reynolds monitored hunting, fishing and trapping statutes before he died May 9 in Monroe. He had lobbied officials successfully and unsuccessfully on outdoor sports issues over the past several years. He was the sole signatory on his last petition against the three trapping rules.

His petition claims that the Commission does not have the authority to make the rules in question. It also states that October is an important month for trapping, which might help protect the state's declining pheasant population by removing predators.

"These rules impair the ability of our trappers to earn income from their trade and as such these rules have an economic impact on our small business owners," Reynolds wrote in his petition.

Game, Fish and Parks officials say the rules in question were adopted according to current laws and procedure.

"You not only have the authority to regulate wildlife resources but also the recreational uses associated with those wildlife resources," said Tony Leif, director of the Wildlife Division. "That's primarily what these rules are in force to manage."

Pertussis Cases Increasing In SD

PIERRE (AP) — Health officials say the number of pertussis cases in South Dakota is on the rise.

The Department of Health says that while the state saw 67 cases last year, 29 have been reported in the first five months of 2014.

Pertussis is also known as whooping cough. It's a highly contagious disease that's spread through the air by cough.

The department says there are several suspected cases and many close contacts. A disproportionate number of cases have been reported in the Black Hills area.

Early symptoms resemble a common cold. The cough becomes more severe within two weeks and is characterized by episodes of numerous rapid coughs followed by a crowing or high pitched whoop.

Officials are urging parents to make sure their children are vaccinated against the disease.

Johnson, Thune Try To Pause VA Closure

RAPID CITY (AP) — South Dakota's two U.S. senators have taken steps to prevent the closure of Veterans Affairs medical facilities in the western part of the state.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has already selected a company to study its plan to realign the facilities in the Black Hills, but U.S. Sens. Tim Johnson and John Thune recently proposed legislation that would pause the federal agency's proposed changes, the *Rapid City Journal* reported Thursday.

The VA has served veterans in Hot Springs for more than a century but now wants to move some services to Rapid City. The Hot Springs VA hospital that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places would be shuttered, and an outpatient clinic would be opened.

Johnson, a Democrat, said he has added language to a funding bill that would prohibit the use of money from the fiscal year that starts in October to close VA hospitals, conduct environmental assessments and "diminish health care services at existing Veterans Health Administration medical facilities."

The VA chose Labat Environmental of Bellevue, Nebraska, to study the potential environmental, cultural, historic, social and economic effects of the proposed changes. It could take up to 1 1/2 years to complete the analysis.

Meanwhile, Thune said he introduced legislation that would block the VA from closing medical facilities or conducting studies regarding potential closures until the agency's inspector general reports to Congress on the alleged delays that veterans have experienced in getting health care, an issue that has become a national scandal.

The agency is facing a growing crisis over allegations of treatment delays and falsified reports at its medical facilities. The inspector general at the Veterans Affairs Department says 26 VA facilities are being investigated nationwide.

Federal Highway Aid Uncertain As Legislators Begin Their Study

BY BOB MERCER

State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — The federal government's highway trust fund will run out of highway money this summer, putting road and bridge projects into financial uncertainty, South Dakota Transportation Secretary Darin Bergquist said Thursday.

He told members of the state Transportation Commission that the fund could be empty as early as July unless Congress provides an injection of general funds.

This isn't new. Facing a shortfall in 2008, the federal highway administration slowed reimbursements to states, until Congress approved supplemental funding.

Complicating the situation is the current federal transportation law, known as MAP-21, expires Sept. 30 with the end of the 2014 federal fiscal year.

Bergquist said there is a \$100 billion gap between expected revenue and current programs.

"That will be the real starting point to getting anything done," he said.

Leaders in the U.S. House of Representatives have said they want to pass a new six-year bill before going on October break, while the U.S. Senate's committee on environment and public works delivered its version earlier this month.

The federal-aid highway program apportions about \$40 million annually for daily reimbursements to state transportation departments for road and bridge construction projects, according to testimony presented in February to the Senate committee.

Earlier this week, Gov. Dennis Daugaard said he is willing to consider increasing South Dakota's motor-fuel taxes. He previously was opposed to tax increases.

South Dakota's main rate has been 22 cents per gallon since 1999 for gasoline and diesel used for highway travel. Ethanol blends and biodiesel have lower rates.

Transportation Commission member Jerry Shoener of Rapid City said Daugaard's change could be significant because the Legislature has assigned a

study committee to look at road and bridge funding.

Shoener recalled that he tried but couldn't get a fuel-tax increase passed while he was a state senator. "We are taxing the people using the facility, the roads," he said.

"That will be a main issue for that summer committee," commission member Ralph Marquardt of Yankton said. The legislative panel's first meeting will be June 17 in Pierre.

Bergquist said the studies conducted in 2008 and 2009 played "a big part" in the legislation that passed in 2011 raising license plate fees.

Daugaard tried to stop the increases by vetoing the bill but legislators overrode him.

For the 2015 state fiscal year that begins July 1, 2014, the state Department of Transportation is budgeted to receive \$380.7 million of federal funding, including \$347 million for construction.

Another \$220.2 million is budgeted to come from South Dakota sources such as motor-fuel taxes for construction and DOT general operations.

Widow Of Crazy Horse Sculptor Dies

BY CARSON WALKER

Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS — Ruth Ziolkowski, who carried on her late husband's dream of honoring Native Americans by carving the massive likeness of warrior Crazy Horse into the Black Hills in South Dakota, has died. She was 87.

Ziolkowski, a soft-spoken visionary, oversaw the ongoing project until she entered hospice care in April, a month after her cancer diagnosis. She died Wednesday night in Rapid City, memorial spokesman Mike Morgan said.

"Ruth Ziolkowski, the remarkable matriarch of Crazy Horse Memorial, was loved and admired by millions who were inspired by her example to 'never forget your dreams,'" said Jack Marsh, a member of Crazy Horse Memorial Foundation. "Ruth, as much as anyone, advanced reconciliation between the Native and non-Native people of the United States."

Then Ruth Carolyn Ross, she came to South Dakota's Black Hills from Connecticut in 1948, with other young people who volunteered to help sculptor Korczak Ziolkowski begin the carving that year. The two were married Thanksgiving Day in 1950 at the site. He was 42 and she was 24.

The sculptor took on the



COURTESY PHOTO
Ruth Ziolkowski, shown here with her husband, sculptor Korczak Ziolkowski, died Wednesday at age 87.

project at the invitation of Lakota Chief Henry Standing Bear who, referring to nearby Mount Rushmore National Memorial, wrote a letter to him saying, "We would like the white man to know the red men have great heroes also."

Korczak Ziolkowski, who helped Gutzon Borglum at

Mount Rushmore in 1939, contemplated the offer before accepting.

"He decided it would be well worth his life carving a mountain, not just as a memorial to the Indian people," Ruth Ziolkowski told The Associated Press in 2006. "He felt by having the mountain carving, he could give back

some pride. And he was a believer that if your pride is intact you can do anything in this world you want to do."

Crazy Horse was a legendary Oglala Lakota warrior who helped lead the 1876 attack against Gen. George Custer's 7th Cavalry at the Battle of the Little Bighorn in Montana. A soldier's bayonet killed him the following year in Nebraska.

Mrs. Z, as she was known around the 1,000-acre complex, took over the project upon Korczak Ziolkowski's 1982 death and tried to heed his last words: "Crazy Horse must be finished. You must work on the mountain — but slowly, so you do it right."

She helped lead the effort to shift the focus from the horse to carving the warrior's 90-foot-tall face, a move credited with an infusion of donations and worldwide interest in the project. It was dedicated in 1998 at the 50th anniversary ceremony.

Although the carving remains slow-going, the site now includes a welcome center, Native American museum, educational and training area, restaurant, gift shop and the Indian University of North America, which will host 32 students this summer who take college courses and work at the complex.

Wausa

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Marks said. Each school faces challenges in those areas and could be stronger by working together, he added.

"The small-town setting is a good place to raise your children. At the same time, we can't guarantee it's going to remain," he said. "These five schools need to be pro-active, not reactive. We have seen that, together, we can go far. The sky's the limit. What is best for your children?"

The current discussion has focused on academics, Marks said. NECC has entered the discussion to help with building a curriculum that would benefit the participating schools, he said.

The four superintendents have met with NECC president Michael Chippis and other college officials. The NECC officials have offered to work with the five school districts on curriculum opportunities fitting a multi-school arrangement.

"We need to take a look at what we have to offer presently at the individual schools, what we can offer collectively and what ways Northeast can be involved," Marks said.

NECC has worked with other school districts, and the college is interested in the uniqueness of the five-school study, Marks said. The focus remains on meeting a wide variety of students' needs, from accelerated courses and dual credits to vocational courses. At the same time, the five schools need to give their students the tools to success in post-secondary education and the workforce, he said.

"What do we need to provide a well-rounded education?" he asked.

A number of audience members raised concerns about entering a multi-school agreement, even if it's not consolidation.

In response to audience

questions, Wausa principal Brad Hoelsing said, based on current enrollments, the five-school system would enroll about 106 students per high school class.

Given those figures, some Wausa patrons said they preferred the small-school atmosphere and one-on-one instruction. They were concerned their children would not perform as well academically in a larger school.

They also worried the Wausa students wouldn't enjoy the same athletic and fine arts opportunities as they currently experience. They also noted the five-school arrangement would create one of the larger districts in the state, thrusting students into competition against much larger communities.

Questions were also raised about taxes and paying for new facilities and other expenses.

"With all five districts combined for assessed valuations, the total would be greater than \$2 billion," Marks said. "It would be one of the wealthiest larger Class B schools in the state with a small-town atmosphere."

One patron said he feared the loss of local control, particularly when it comes to the continuation of events such as baccalaureate.

"Right now, we control and keep our identity," he said. "If we go in with five schools, we stand to lose that identity."

Hoelsing read a letter from a student who praised the opportunities offered at Wausa. She hoped the district would remain in operation, if possible.

"Wausa is a great community, and nothing can change that," she wrote.

But another patron said the much larger school system can offer new opportunities.

"We all know someone from these other schools," he said. "None of these communities is going to allow something to happen to their kids that would put them in jeopardy. We're all looking out for the same things."

A Wausa patron later told the *Press & Dakotan* that she had gone through the consoli-

dation process in her hometown elsewhere in Nebraska. While her home district didn't go in with the merger, the process still remained difficult, she said.

The five schools are finding it increasingly difficult to go it alone because of declining enrollment, staffing issues and tougher accreditation standards, Marks said. As more teachers retire, rural districts find difficulty in recruiting and retaining new teachers.

The school districts' financial woes look to be accelerated in the coming years, Marks said. The Wausa district, which formerly received \$640,000 in state aid, will only receive \$7,000 next year.

"That's \$600,00 down. Where do you make it up? With the local taxpayer," he said. "There is only so much you can cut out of the budget before you have the reverse effect. And there's only so many demands you can make on teachers."

School districts may also see changes in their assessed valuation, adding to the tax problems, Marks said. The Wausa district doesn't want to go into a tax levy override, he said.

"If they roll back our assessed values, and they don't make it up in state aid, there are school districts that will be in a world of hurt," he said. "Right now, we can grow our budget one-half of 1 percent. That's \$10,000 for Wausa."

The five-school study offers new opportunities and has drawn much attention because of the large number of schools, Marks said. However, he noted the schools' proximity make any result very workable.

"We felt there was a uniqueness about the five schools' geography, where they're most centered," he said. "They're not 30 or 40 miles apart."

Besides the five schools' administrators, group meetings have been limited to three board members from each school, Marks said. By avoiding a quorum from any school board, the joint meetings don't

trigger open-meetings requirements, he added.

Marks noted consolidation of any or all schools is an option. However, he emphasized the schools are far from making any final decisions. The final product may be five years down the road, he added.

"Of the current study, 64 different scenarios were developed among the five schools, but only four scenarios involved all five schools," Marks said. "One scenario was to build a new 7-12 building. The second scenario was to build a new 9-12 building with junior high facilities to be at two or more of the existing high school buildings."

In all of the scenarios, the elementary school would remain in each community in either a pre-kindergarten to sixth grade or pre-kindergarten to fourth grade, Marks said.

"The elementary schools are not part of the discussions," he said. "They would remain in their communities. That's what we (school) officials thought would be best."

While a two-school arrangement is possible, the districts believe a minimum of three schools is needed to make any real difference, Marks said.

School mergers are already occurring in neighboring districts, Marks said. He pointed to

the Hartington-Newcastle and Laurel-Concord/Coleridge mergers that were recently approved and take effect this fall.

"My fear is that we will become an island," he said. "We haven't done that, but we can't guarantee it."

In answer to audience questions, the Wausa school board members said they thought the district's future was too big a decision for the six members. Ultimately, the final decision should be made by an informed public which feels it has a voice and that a democratic process has been followed, the board members said.

The five school superintendents decided to create a central website by June 1 to post all meeting notes, submit questions and receive answers about

Congratulations



Heartland Humane Society Ribbon Cutting

The Yankton Chamber of Commerce Ambassadors hosted a ribbon cutting for Heartland Humane Society in their new facility located at 3400 E. Hwy. 50. Kerry Schmidt Executive Director for Heartland works with Yankton, Vermillion and the surrounding communities to save unwanted animals and readopt them to permanent homes. Donations are always welcome. To learn more go to their website at www.heartlandhumanesociety.net or you can contact them at (605)664-4244 or you can email them at hhs@midconetwork.com they are open Tuesday - Friday 10 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. and Saturday 10-2 a.m.

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