

OUTDOORS DIGEST

GFP Commission Finalizes Increases For State Parks, Boating Fees

PIERRE - The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Commission finalized several fee adjustments to help with the continued success of operating and maintaining the South Dakota state park system.

These fee increases will need to be approved by the Legislative Rules Review committee before they are effective in late 2015.

The nonresident telephone campsite reservation fee will increase from \$7.70 to \$9.90. The resident telephone campsite reservation fee will increase from no cost to \$2. The fee will help offset the higher cost of reservations made through the call center. Campers who choose to make reservations online, rather than by telephone, will pay no additional fee.

Last year 17,003 daily trail passes were sold for the George S. Mickelson Trail. The proposed \$1 fee increase from \$3 to \$4 will help support costs of operating and maintaining this 114-mile trail system; this will also make the daily fee consistent with the existing daily fee for other South Dakota state parks and recreation areas.

The seven day vehicle pass for Custer State Park will increase from \$15 to \$20.

The Custer State Park week long pass is comparable to similar fees charged today at Rocky Mountain National Park (\$20), Theodore Roosevelt National Park (\$20), Yellowstone National Park (\$30) and Grand Teton National Park (\$30). Custer State Park is an iconic destination park and hosts many of the same out of state guests that frequent these National Parks. The last fee increase for the seven day pass was six years ago.

Boat license fees help to maintain quality boating access to lakes, reservoirs and rivers across the state. Motorboats less than 19 feet long will see an annual license fee increase from \$20 to \$25; motorboats 19 feet or greater in length will see a license fee increase from \$40 to 45; and non-motorized boats over 12 feet in length will see a license fee increase from \$12.50 to \$15. The boat license fee increase is utilized to help offset the cost of providing boat ramps, associated facilities and vehicular access to areas serving boaters.

State Record Paddlefish Snagged By Neb. Man

LINCOLN, Neb. -- A Malcolm, Neb., man has set a state fish record for the largest paddlefish caught by rod and reel. The record was certified by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

Tom Keller snagged a 113-pound, 4-ounce paddlefish on Oct. 9 while fishing the Gavins Point Dam tailwaters of the Missouri River in northeast Nebraska. The fish measured 49.75 inches in length.

That fish broke the previous state record of 107 pounds, 12 ounces set in 2011.

Other fish records have been set in recent months.

Zachary Welch of Ainsworth set a bowfishing record July 1 when he arrowed a 14.4-ounce, 10-inch hybrid sunfish (green sunfish-bluegill cross) in a private sandpit in Brown County. The previous record was 10 ounces.

Donavon Uhing of Blair set a bowfishing record for grass carp on July 5 when he shot a 78-pound, 14-ounce fish at a private lake in Washington County. He then broke his record on Aug. 18 at the same lake when he arrowed a 79 pound-10 ounce fish.

Neb. Hunters Urged To Use Caution During Big Game Seasons

NORTH PLATTE, Neb. -- With moose being reported in the Panhandle this year and a confirmed sighting of a young bull in Lincoln County this week the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission is urging hunters to be certain of their target before taking a shot.

Moose can be similar in appearance to other big game animals. Moose are large animals with a "bell" or large piece of skin under their necks; they have a pronounced shoulder hump and bulls (males) will have palmated antlers. Moose also have long, whitish colored legs and are dark brown in color.

Hunters will want to study game closely before firing a shot or releasing an arrow.

Game and Parks officials also remind people to keep their distance from any moose they may encounter as some have been known to become aggressive.

Know Your Target And Bag Limit For Neb.

Firearm Deer Season

LINCOLN -- As hunters prepare for the Nov. 14 opening of the firearm deer season, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission has two reminders for them: know your permit bag limit and know that the animal you are preparing to take is legal to harvest.

Game and Parks says it is important that hunters know the restrictions that may come with a permit, especially since those restrictions may change from year to year. Every deer permit has species and location restrictions. Most permits have mule deer restrictions, many permits have antlerless whitetail restrictions, and some permits have public land restrictions.

Hunters should review regulations, shooting hours, season dates, unit boundaries and other regulations to ensure that the animal they harvest is legal.

"The hunting experience will be more enjoyable if each hunter takes the proper precautions to know the permit restrictions, as well as the animal they are about to shoot," said Kit Hams, big game program manager for Game and Parks. "Know the identifying characteristics of the animal that is legal for you to take. That moose, elk or antlerless mule deer you see will look a lot better running across the pasture than sitting in the truck of a Nebraska Game and Parks Commission conservation officer."

Of The Outdoors | Gary Howey

A Dog Can Teach You A Lot

BY GARY HOWEY

Hartington, Neb.

I hope that prior to the opening of the season; you and your dog have gotten out doing some walking to get in shape.

As anyone who has hunted behind a dog, a dog, one that is in good shape and well-trained, makes for a great hunt and much more effective than simply wondering around in the field hoping to stumble onto a bird.

Over the years, I have hunted over all types of dogs, had some great hunts as well as frustrating ones when a dog we were hunting behind, was out of control.

I have also hunted with all types of hunters, from the very new to the seasoned pro and found out some of these hunters could learn a lot by simply paying attention to their dog.

Take for instance one hunt in a huge CRP field where we were hunting with a yellow Lab.

It's a fact, all dogs don't work the same, all hunting differently, some in high gear, bounding through the tall grass while others will methodically work their way through it, nose just inches above the ground trying to pick up the birds scent.

My dog's nose was close to the ground, his tail whirling in a tight circle as he worked through the field, going back and forth in front of the hunters.

Unfortunately, the owner of another dog was always yelling at the top of his lungs, or blowing his dog whistle, attempting to get his dog to hunt in front of him and nowhere else.

The dog knew better, as he hot on the trail and knew where the birds were, which was not in front of his owner. This was an owner who



GARY HOWEY PHOTO

Listen to what your hunting dog is trying to tell you and your hunting success will improve greatly.

thought he was a whole lot smarter than his dog and wanted it to hunt where he was hunting.

When the owner headed for the dog, with one thing on his mind and that was not to flush a bunch of birds but to reprimand the dog.

When he charged over to drag his dog back, he stumbled into the birds the dog was working, totally screwing up our entire hunt, as the birds out in front of the dog erupted from the cover, startling the angry hunter and putting the birds out of range of the rest of the hunting party.

Sometimes, we humans forget that, even though we have a larger brain than a dog, and can work out some of the most complex problems in the world, other critters in the animal kingdom are better suited for some jobs than we are.

Over the years, after making several blunders myself, one of which was very similar to the hunter above, I have learned to follow the dog, no matter what direction he is going.

A dog's nose is a hunter's best friend and by following the dog instead of forcing it to follow you, your hunt will be more successful.

There is nothing that says we have to hunt straight across a field.

In fact, it is better, especially in the late season to zig zag across the field. You are covering more of the field hunting this way. By doing this, you may make those birds that have buried themselves deep in the grass, nervous hoping you will walk by them. Once the dog zeroes in on the birds, the hunters can move up and let the dog flush the birds in front of the hunters, giving you and your hunting partners better shot opportunities.

With your dog under control, he is not going to range out too far ahead and screw up the hunt you have waited for all year. The best way to hunt a field, is to allow the dog to lead the way and take you to the birds.

Once hunted with a friend whose black Lab would hit the field on a dead run with his owner not too far behind him. This meant both the dog and the hunter were way out ahead of the other hunters, which is not only a pain for the other hunters; it is also down right dangerous!

I had several suggestions as to what my friend could do to control the dog. One was to use a training collar on the dog, which he did not like. The other was to sell me the dog and I would shoot it putting it

Minn. Hunters Prepare For Firearms Deer Opener

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — An army of Minnesota hunters clad in blaze orange will take to the woods in force Saturday as the state's main firearms deer season opens. Here are some things to know about this year's hunt:

A Rebuilding Season

The Department of Natural Resources says more deer are out in the woods this fall, so hunters may see more deer from their tree stands — though restrictions on shooting antlerless deer means another conservative season. The state's deer herd has grown thanks to a relatively mild winter and fewer antlerless permits last season. But for the second season in a row, the DNR is seeking to rebuild the herd in areas where deer populations remain below their goals. One-deer limits remain in place across most of the state, and it's a bucks-only season again in northern Minnesota to ensure that more fawns will be born next spring. The DNR projects this season's harvest at 140,000 to 155,000 deer, compared with about 139,000 last season. Last season's success rate was 25 percent for firearms hunters. Minnesota's deer population is estimated at about 1 million.

Governor's Deer Opener

Mountain Iron is hosting the 13th annual Minnesota Governor's Deer Hunting Opener, with most festivities set for Thursday and Friday. However, Gov. Mark Dayton isn't able to attend. Dayton spokesman Matt Swenson said the governor's father has been ill for the last couple days, so he plans to spend time with his family. Lt. Gov. Tina Smith was set to speak at the banquet Thursday night in his place. The official deer opener tradition began under Gov. Tim Pawlenty, an avid deer hunter. Dayton hasn't hunted at any of them before because he's not a deer hunter, but he normally appears at some of the public events. Dayton is an avid pheasant hunter, though, and founded the official Minnesota Governor's Pheasant Opener.

Economic Impacts

Minnesota has nearly 500,000 deer hunters, and they spend lots of money on their passion. A 2011 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service study found that all hunting-related expenditures in Minnesota totaled \$725 million annually. Trip-related expenses including food, lodging and transportation totaled \$235 million. Hunters spent \$400 million on equipment, and \$90 million on licenses, permits, land leasing and ownership, magazines, membership dues and other items.

For More Information

The DNR urges hunters to review new regulations, permit area designations and boundary changes. One change for 2015 affects licenses purchased after the season opens. They're valid the same day only if purchased before legal shooting hours. If they're purchased after shooting hours open (a half-hour before sunrise), they're not valid until the following day.

Kessler Wins Governor's Distinguished Service Award

PIERRE - A longtime and dedicated Aberdeen conservationist was honored at Gov. Dargaard's Annual Invitational Pheasant Hunt.

Tim Kessler received the Distinguished Conservation Service Award, recognizing his time, effort and resources dedicated to protecting South Dakota's outdoor heritage of hunting, fishing and camping.

"Tim walks the conservation walk and talks the habitat talk," said Game, Fish and Parks Secretary Kelly Hepler. "He actively practices habitat conservation on his own land and was instrumental in the planning and implementation of the 2013 Governor's Pheasant Habitat Summit. I can't imagine a more deserving outdoorsman for this first ever award."

Kessler guided conversations and participated in the Habitat Work Group, which focused on bringing outdoor enthusiasts and agricultural producers to the table together to find workable, effective habitat solutions. He also committed the first \$100,000 to kick off the Habitat Conservation Fund.

"Tim has taken this Habitat Conservation Fund to heart and is now spearheading a one million dollar matching challenge for habitat," said Hepler. "I know with Tim's backing we will get it done."

Kessler is active in national conservation efforts as a member of the national Pheasants Forever Board of Directors and a supporter of Ducks Unlimited.

Kessler previously served as a Game, Fish and Parks Commissioner, serving as chairman over most of his 14 years on the Commission. During that time he oversaw the establishment of the Sioux Falls Outdoor Campus and the completion of the Mickelson Trail in the Black Hills as well as aided in hunting and wildlife management decisions.

Braggin' Board

Sponsored by:



Gary Payne of Vermillion caught this 8-pound, 29-inch Walleye.



Jay Gravholt of Yankton is pictured with this 5.5-pound, 30-inch Walleye he caught.



Ronnie Koletzky of Tabor caught this Paddlefish.



Scotty Dittmer caught this Catfish on the James River.

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