

R.C. Man Tried To Hit Officers With Car

RAPID CITY (AP) — A prosecutor says a Rapid City man shot by a trooper had jumped in the front seat of a patrol car and was trying to hit officers with the vehicle when he was hit. A large bandage covered the right side of 27-year-old William Chandler's neck when he made his first court appearance Wednesday. Bond was set at \$250,000. Troopers were chasing him and 23-year-old Joseph Paul Andrews Monday afternoon on Interstate 90 when road spikes flattened their tires. Officers put the two in the back of a patrol car, but Chandler somehow jumped into the front seat and took off. He hit a dead end and backing up when he was shot. It's unclear if he wiggled out of the cuffs or slipped his legs through his cuffed hands.

Neb. Flooding May Affect Private Water

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska officials say recent flooding in the state may pose serious threats to the quality of private water wells. The state Department of Health and Human Services says private water wells may need to be tested for bacterial contamination. Jack Daniel, head of the department's drinking water and environmental health office, says there are currently no problems with public drinking water supplies. Daniel says water from private wells in flooded areas should not be considered safe for drinking until they are properly tested. He says possible signs of contamination include cloudiness or a change in taste or smell.

More Than 55 Pounds Of Pot Found

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Authorities say more than 55 pounds of marijuana has been found in a vehicle in eastern Nebraska. The Douglas County Sheriff's Office says 35-year-old David Costanzo was stopped Wednesday morning on Interstate 80. Officers say Costanzo's vehicle was stopped on suspicion of following too closely. A dog on the department's K-9 unit led to the vehicle being searched. More than 55 pounds of marijuana were found in the rented car's trunk. Costanzo was arrested and faces possession with the intent to deliver a controlled substance and no tax stamp. Court records do not list an attorney.

Police Seize 11 Lbs. Of Pot In Nebraska

VALENTINE, Neb. (AP) — Two South Dakota residents are facing charges after being caught with 11 pounds of marijuana in north-central Nebraska. Nebraska State Patrol spokeswoman Deb Collins says a trooper found the marijuana Tuesday morning during a traffic stop near Valentine. The trooper stopped a 2006 Dodge Charger on Highway 83 about 20 miles south of Valentine because it didn't have a front license plate. During the stop, the trooper smelled marijuana, so he searched the car. Several duffel bags full of the drug were found in the trunk. Both 24-year-old Reginald Willett and 24-year-old Cassandra Asieha were arrested on suspicion of possessing marijuana with the intent to deliver it. They are both from Sioux Falls.

GFP Faces Big-Game Review Report

BY BOB MERCER
State Capitol Bureau

SPEARFISH — The first two hours of the state Game, Fish and Parks Commission's meeting here Thursday afternoon will involve some of the most important listening in the modern history of trophy hunting in South Dakota.

The commission will hear from an outside consultant on its findings and recommendations on big game management, a study that Gov. Dennis Daugaard ordered be done at the commission's expense.

And the second hour of the meeting will find the commission holding a public hearing on the 2014 hunting season for mountain lions, the species whose management in the past decade led in many ways led to the governor's decision to get an outside review of the state Wildlife Division.

The results of the study are being kept under wraps from the general public until 1 p.m. MT Thursday when the reviewers from the nationally recognized Wildlife Management Institute of Gardners, Pennsylvania, present the report.

The governor's private briefing on the report was scheduled for Wednesday, according to his chief of staff, Dusty Johnson.

State Game, Fish and Parks Secretary Jeff Vonk, a member of the governor's cabinet, doesn't expect the review will have any bearing on the commission's decision regarding the 2014 mountain lion season that will be made either Thursday afternoon or Friday morning.

"I don't expect that the WMI report will contain recommendations of the type that would have an impact on the season setting process that is currently under way," Vonk said.

The 2013 season for mountain lions was notable for three reasons.

The commission set the 2013 harvest limit at its highest levels — 70 females or 100 lions total, whichever was reached first — since a hunting season was resumed in 2005.

The harvest for the first time didn't exceed the previous year. Hunters took a total of 61 lions: 26 males and 35 females. That was down from 73 in 2012.

And because the harvest limit wasn't reached, the 2013 season ran its full length rather than closing early.

State Wildlife Division biologists have set a goal of 150 to 200 lions as the goal for the Black Hills population. Their recommendation for the 2014 season, which would actually start Dec. 26, 2013, is a harvest limit of 50 females or a total of 75 lions within the Black Hills fire protection district's boundary.

The main Black Hills season would run through March 31, 2014, unless one of the harvest levels was reached.

The harvest limit includes lions taken by hunters in Custer State Park, where there would again be special limited-access hunts within the main season.

Essentially the biologists have suggested setting the harvest limit at the approximate level of the lions actually taken in the 2012 season.

Some adjustments to the Custer State Park hunts are also proposed.

The public hearing on the lion season starts at 2 p.m. Thursday (MT). The commission meeting is at the Spearfish Holiday Inn.

Mountain lions are one of the big-game species whose management by the Wildlife Division and the commission was considered in the outside review.

The commission and division work together in setting seasons in a process where the biologists make recommendations at a formal time to the commission at a public meeting, followed by the commission making a formal proposal at that meeting and a public hearing typically one or two months later. After the hearing the commission makes a final determination on the season.

Because there are multiple species that also include deer and elk, that process happens multiple times during a year. The reviewers looked at the internal processes leading to the biologists' recommendations and the public process involving the commission.

While the commission and division established a formal management plan for mountain lions several years ago, there aren't management plans in place for all big-game species.

Wildlife Management Institute was selected through an official "request for proposal" state contracting process. The agreement called for delivery of the report no later than Oct. 1, with WMI to

receive up to \$131,050 for the work.

The governor's decision to direct the commission that the study would be done and the commission would pay for the study marked the first time in recent memory that a governor took such action in Game, Fish and Parks policy in South Dakota.

Johnson, the governor's chief of staff, said the recommendation to conduct the study was made to the governor by a policy advisory team that was discussing big-game management. He said the team members were himself, then-advisor Jason Glodt, then-chairman of the commission Jeff Olson of Rapid City and former commissioner Tim Kessler of Aberdeen.

Glodt has since left the governor's staff to help form a political consulting firm whose major client is former Gov. Mike Rounds, who is running for the U.S. Senate. Olson was finishing his final year on the commission in 2012.

Johnson said that Daugaard sought independent reviews on a variety of topics in his three years as governor.

"He believes that periodically inviting scrutiny by a fresh set of eyes is a part of being a good manager," Johnson said.

Daugaard had long heard from landowners who believed they were suffering too many crop losses and from sportsmen who wanted more game to hunt, making it difficult to determine "the truth," according to Johnson. That led to the independent third party being sought to look at the department.

"He wanted to know what the department is doing well and what needs to be improved," Johnson said.

The commission's chairwoman, Susie Knippling of Gann Valley, said the commission members haven't seen the report.

"I don't think it will have any bearing on the lion harvest decision because we won't have enough time to really read the report unless there is a highlighted section telling us how the vote should go," she said Wednesday afternoon.

"I am not sure if the report will be posted on-line (on the Internet) but I believe it will, unless people are listed by name. We will be deciding tomorrow (Thursday) how to proceed with what came out of the report," Knippling added.

Heineman Renews Call For Tax Cuts

BY GRANT SCHULTE
Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — Nebraska Gov. Dave Heineman renewed his call for tax cuts on Wednesday, saying the state should focus on lowering property and income tax rates when the Legislature convenes next year.

The Republican governor argued that property tax reductions would benefit rural Nebraskans, who have complained for years about the rates on farms and ranchland. Lowering income taxes would help urban wage earners, he said.

"I want to be standing here ... with every member of the Legislature standing behind me, signing a bill that provides direct tax relief to the citizens of Nebraska — income and property taxes," Heineman said at a news conference at the Capitol. "That's the goal."

His comments came in the midst of a legislative review of Nebraska's tax system, which has included public hearings in Scottsbluff, North Platte and Norfolk. The Legislature's Tax Modernization Committee has traveled across the state over the last month to gather input from residents. One of the most common complaints so far has come from farmers, ranchers and homeowners, who say they pay too much in property taxes. Additional hearings are scheduled in Lincoln and Omaha.

State government has no direct control over property taxes, which are set at the local level. But Heineman said the state could use Nebraska's property tax credit fund to reduce what property owners have to pay. He dismissed the idea of restoring state aid directly to cities and counties, saying they would likely spend it rather than use it to lower property taxes.

Heineman pointed to rankings by the Washington, D.C.-based Tax Foundation, which has identified Nebraska having as one of the 16 highest state income tax rates and one of the 13 highest property tax rates. Heineman has argued that Nebraska's tax system is outdated, saying it reflects an outdated economy that hasn't seen a major overhaul since the 1960s.

Heineman also called for a reduction in the state's top income tax rate, saying it would attract more jobs that pay \$60,000 to \$100,000 per year.

Critics have argued that income tax cuts would have little to no economic benefit for the state and would drain money from schools, health care and other services that contribute to economic growth.

Nebraska ranks 43rd nationally in the state aid it provides to local governments, and 49th in the aid it gives to schools.

Pierre Boy's Trial Delayed For Appeal

PIERRE (AP) — A judge Wednesday delayed the trial of a South Dakota boy accused of fatally shooting a classmate so his attorneys can appeal to the state Supreme Court their argument that the case should be handled in juvenile court.

Braiden McCahren, 17, has pleaded not guilty to first-degree murder, attempted first-degree murder and aggravated assault in the Dec. 18 shooting of Dalton Williams, 16. McCahren is accused of shooting Williams with a shotgun after first pointing the weapon at another 16-year-old boy following an argument about a paintball game.

The shooting took place in the McCahren home in

Pierre. He was 16 years old at the time. His defense lawyers earlier argued it was an accident.

After taking testimony earlier this month, Circuit Court Judge John Brown ruled McCahren should be tried as an adult, starting Oct. 21, because of the seriousness of the crime, its impact on the community and the families, and McCahren's lack of remorse.

On Wednesday, Brown granted a defense request for a delay in the trial so his earlier ruling could be appealed, KCCR-AM reported.

If convicted as a juvenile, McCahren could be held by the state until he is 21. In adult court, he faces up to life in prison.

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