

# Public Comments

## Elk Hunting Seasons

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**Sean Fulton**

**Rapid City SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Please carefully consider and read my attached letter.

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**Steve Cherkas**

**Edgemont SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

I would like to see an elk landowner program like you do with deer where I can get a license to hunt elk ONLY on my land at a reduce price with 160 acres. I have lots of elk every year and have no interest in hunting them anywhere but my land, but only have 233 acres so do no qualify for existing program.

# Landowner Elk License Applications

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**Gerald Ohman**

**Glenham SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

- In all the elk season/change proposal they only show the 2018 elk harvest data. Why didn't they show the 2019 harvest data? So is GFP setting the 2020 & 2021 elk tag quotas off of the 2018, two years old, harvest data???
  - Did GFP have any public involvement or seek input on this new SD GFP Proposed "landowner own-land" elk tag.
  - Why was the 500 elk use days proposed to be removed? That requirement helped to keep the landowners honest. Remember, any unused tags go back to public. They say CO doesn't have time to check elk use days. Think they'll have time to see if the elk are habitually using their property. The new landowners that will now apply with no elk use Days will increase with less leftover landowner tags that the public use to get.
  - Why should a landowner get to harvest an elk on August 1st and Joe Public can'tt? What about in late winter over alfalfa or hay bales? Doesn't seem equitable or fare.
  - What landowner involvement did SD GFP do for their new "landowner own-land" elk tag proposal? Who's behind this and what about the tens of thousands of hunters that may only get 1 or 2 elk permits their entire lives while many landowners will receive dozens and can still hunt public lands.
  - What's next transferable landowner elk tags for pure profit to NRs?
  - Black Hills unit H3 is increasing from 80 any elk rifle tags to 100 any elk rifle tags. H3 cow tags going from 195 rifle cow tags to 270 rifle cow tags. Archery stayed the same. This info was posted today. The day before the finalization meeting. How can they do that and not allow any public comment.
  - The aerial elk survey results will be presented at the finalization meeting. No public comment. I'm told GFP did this the same thing 4 years ago when the last aerial survey happened.
  - If we have landowners with depredation claims and are compensated through hunters dollars (1/2 of PP fees) then why do they get a bull tag every year instead of a cow tag? Should LOs get both a bull tag and depredation payments? Why not one or the other and how about asking them to enter property into WIA to help with their "damage" or require that the depredation monies are used for fencing to reduce future depredation?
- I think this is a very important issue and I'm not convinced that SD sportsmen and our public trust resources are being considered here at all.

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**Kurt Rahlf**

**Mobridge SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

should be either a license or the money for the depredation not both

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**Stephen Turner**

**Rapid SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

I would like to see the same for landowner deer tags as well, if they're getting a landowner tag, it should be for hunting their land that the game is causing the problem! Most of the landowners with more than 50 head of cows don't winter the herd in the hills anyway.

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**Dana Rogers**

**Hill City SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Regarding landowner elk season proposed changes. It's my understanding that this originated with approximately 87 Spearfish area landowners that enlisted a legislator. A meeting was held with this legislator, GFP representation and approximately 35 landowners with complaints in attendance.

They asked for transferable tags to sell, a guaranteed tag on their own land for a 8-month season (Aug-Mar), which will eliminate the cap of 50% of the available permits. Also to totally remove the 500 elk use days with proof to obtain these landowner permits.

Commissioners, PLEASE NOTE that basing a LO permit on habitual elk use without actual proof opens this door extremely wide for abuse. Allowing a LO to choose a LO on own land with an 8 month season independent of the regular season will likely impact large bull harvest and thus total harvest/tag recommendations long term for everyone.

When will the requests for accommodation with our public trust resources end? We already have the Elk Hunting Access Program: Allowing up to \$4,500 per landowner, with additional incentives. This program has paid out \$1,002,270 since 2015.

There is also a fence damage program: Last year \$48,260.92 was spent on this. Though it's NOT a requirement for claimants to actually use the top cable to decrease damage???

GFP has also implemented a stackyard/panel program. Last year \$37,531.64 was spent. Again, no requirement to fence in valuable cattle feed stores is mandated.

We have food plot/hay land contracts: Last year \$150,982.23 was spent on this program.

Please don't take the above as an indictment of all landowners. I know several Black Hills area landowners that qualify for a LO elk permit and they don't ask for a dime. They are simply happy with getting the landowner tag as their compensation. I'd estimate that 50% ask for help. In fact, I'm even aware of a few qualifying landowners that DO NOT even ask for a tag. The aforementioned landowners that don't ask for anything or are happy with 'just a tag' should be championed and revered in my opinion. They are doing us all a great service!

The fact remains that all SD wildlife belongs to the public. All SD residents. We have over 30,000 elk permit applicants a year in SD. Yet this proposal is born from approximately 87 respondents to a legislators survey and 36 that attended a local Spearfish meeting.

Now, I can certainly empathize if there is damage to their livelihood. We sportsmen are paying that bill through 1/2 of the preference point fees that we agreed to. If I have a risk to my property, I personally take countermeasures. Like locking my car door or home door or installing a security system. We see from GFP data that several of the claimant landowners continue to claim damages without using the cable system or installing permanent stack yard fencing. This is curious to me.

Again, about 1/2 of qualifying landowners are happy with a tag and only a tag. Yet we have 37-87 people asking for more while 30,000 sportsmen that pay the bills aren't asked about their opinions on a public resource?

This is certainly a hotly contested and divisive issue at its core, no doubt. Instead of removing license caps, increasing payments without countermeasure stipulations or entertaining selling landowner transferable tags, I'd suggest we offer an option. Do you want a tag, or would you like the depredation, fencing and hunter access payments? What about requiring that landowner tags are only valid on deeded/owned property? After all, these landowners often get dozens of permits in a lifetime while other residents may only draw once or twice in their entire lives.

Additionally, these hunter access payments are NOT tied to Walk In Access. Landowners can say no and can tell a hunter what they can and can't shoot. That's their right under the current Elk Hunting Access Program.

I am not opposed at all to the current and past programs. However, I am most certainly opposed to the continued creep toward commercialization of public trust wildlife resources.

I appreciate your time and involvement as a commission and I ask that you vote NO on the latest request for MORE by a segment of our state residents.

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**Tim Pravecek**

**Winner SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

As I see this proposal It will destroy Land owner/Public Hunters trust and relationship. If the Landowner only hunts on his/or her land during typical season dates I have no problem with that. Especially when there are plenty of programs to compensate the landowners for damage. Also I fear making the tags transferable is a bad precedent.

## Other

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**Kathy Petersen**

**Madison SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Let them alone. Let them live and die on their own, pretty soon they will be extinct and then that can be on your hands.

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**Steve Cherkas**

**Edgemont SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

I would like to change the requirement to present the entire bobcat carcass for tagging. I had coyotes run off with carcass this year. I would like to see it change to present only the head or bottom jaw (we can cut off ourselves) which will make it easier to store inside where predators cannot take it.

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**Steve Cherkas**

**Edgemont SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

I would like to see the bobcat tagging within 5 days to be from end of season rather than each catch. There is alot of wasted time (both trapper and warden) trying to track down a warden to tag bobcats.

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**Helen Gurney Beveridge**

**Dallas OR**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

OMG..The Nest Predator Bounty program ..newborns are orphaned.this is animal abuse!! cruelty with no boundaries..nice going SD..I was born and raised in a SD with dignity..not this.

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**Gene Cox**

**Mobridge SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

In regards to the use of rifles in the Spring Turkey Season. I am opposed this amendment. From a sportsman viewpoint a shotgun and call is the challenge of the sport. From the safety side of things my set up has been stalked by other hunters. Now that I am incorporating the use of decoys I wonder if safety wont be a factor for some. I would recommend shotgun only. Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

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**Justin Broughton**

**Sioux Falls SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

I am writing in support of the additional youth pheasant hunting opportunities as listed in the petition.

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**Laural Bidwell**

**Rapid City SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

I know the discussion on nest predator was yesterday and the decision will come today. I know that you are appointed by the governor -- but the governor should listen to the wishes of the public as should the commission. Do not approve the nest predator program. As you know it doesn't do anything for habitat, it isn't a recreational activity and the public is not for it. Please consider this when you make your decision.

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**Natalie Smith**

**Barrington IL**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Nest Predator Bounty Program

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**Mike Bunkers**

**Dell Rapids SD**

**Position:** support

**Comment:**

After witnessing all the damage along the Sioux River and some of its tributaries done by beaver would it only make sense to add beaver to our bounty program? With depressed fur prices I really don't see an interest in beaver trapping. I'm guessing our State Trapper would agree.

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**Teresa Engebretson**

**Sioux Falls SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

The nest predator bounty program is based on false or non existing information. Opossums eat thousands of ticks. Ticks cause Lyme Disease. Please acknowledge the damage this program is causing when you vote on it again in 2021.

## Youth Pheasant Hunting Season

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**Robert Friedrichsen**

**Redfield SD**

**Position:** oppose

**Comment:**

Youth have plenty of options to hunt for pheasants in SD. They have all season long to hunt; youth are not excluded for the remainder of the season. I grew up without a special youth season; I participated in athletics, debate, and h.s. radio & newspaper; I worked as custodian at the post office (before school began for the day); & I graduated with a 3.9 gpa. I made life choices; something that youth will continue to learn that they will have to make. Even though I had a full academic, athletic, & work schedule; I still was able to enjoy hunting & fishing with parents, grandparents, and uncles & aunts. There is no need to extend the youth season; if a season extension is required to reduce the overpopulation of pheasants; then it should be extended to all residents.

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**Robert Carl**

**Farmington NM**

**Position:** other

**Comment:**

I fully support getting young hunters in the field. As a senior (70+) though we should also get some special consideration as our hunting seasons are limited. Consider having senior only days and a special senior hunting license at a reduced fee. Thank you

I feel the new landowner proposal is worse than the one already instated. At least with the 500 elk use days the landowner has to prove they are getting the elk use necessary to harvest an elk. Furthermore the landowners don't need four months for an, any elk tag. If they want four months they can have an antlerless tag free of charge with approval of GFP. I feel they should have a free antlerless tag, if they want to thin the herd, to use one their own property, August-December. If the landowners use the free tag option they shouldn't be able to apply in the normal landowner tag, for any elk, in the whole unit, which should be for the normal season. Technically this would be to help with depredation of the herd anyway. Even if the game and fish did this the landowners are going to find something else to complain about.

Another thing is the added pressure from all the ATVs and dirt bike trails being built in the hills in core summer elk habitat is pushing the elk into different areas. Hence the elk entering onto the private lands with no or little access, probably eating up the grass in those private fields sooner than they used to.

Another problem is, the added strain of ATV use only trails are in prime summer elk habitat, which is driving the elk into new areas and pushing them all summer long. I've helped friends harvest elk most years any many of the elk that we were getting in the last few years down in the Jasper burn area don't have an ounce of fat on them in October. Leading me to believe that they are constantly being pushed. Yet they still have to make it through the next for five months of the year and they haven't had a chance to build up fat reserves, it's depressing.

If landowners have depredation claims and are compensated through hunter dollars then why do they get a bull tag every year instead of giving them a free cow tag? I don't feel landowners should be allowed both a bull tag and compensation and if they want four months to hunt elk on their own property it should only be a cow tag. Or if the landowners want a bull tag and compensated require them to put 80 percent of their land into the Walk In Area program for three years . This could be limited to one year any elk and the rest as antlerless only. Entering their land into the WIA program should help reduce some damage to their properties, due to increased hunting pressure?"

I feel this is an extremely important issue and feel that SD sportsmen aren't being considered at all here.

Sincerely, Sean Fulton  
11675 W, Hwy 44  
Rapid City, SD 57702

I'm writing to voice my opposition to the Nest Predator Bounty Program. The Resolution is full of misrepresentations. I spent a career in wildlife management, at Custer State Park. I have a PhD in wildlife ecology with my research focusing on predator prey relationships.

Paragraph 1 indicates that the removal of nest predators can enhance nest success, but fails to mention only under very specific conditions. None of these conditions are achieved under this program. Additionally while there was participation in 2019 trapping seminars, the number of trapping licenses sold does not indicate that there were many new people who took up trapping.

Paragraph 2 highlights a "professional scientific survey" of general public support for the Nest Predator Bounty Program. I understand a particular population segment not a general cross section of the general public was surveyed, giving a biased result.

Paragraph 3 indicates removal efforts on "properties with habitat" was used to increase nest success; however, there are no indications or studies to demonstrate the success of such programs. And if so, was it a cost effective effort.

Paragraph 4 acknowledges "intensive predator removal efforts can enhance nest success of pheasants and ducks at localized levels *when* (emphasis added) at high intensities during the nesting season". This type of control is not even approximated under this program. Predator removal must be targeted and intense to even be marginally effective. And even then only of limited duration. This program falls far short.

Paragraph 5. The pilot program in 2019 was a huge expense. Dollars would have been much better used to improve habitat. Habitat improvement is the scientifically established best way to improve pheasant populations.

If this program was about the resource and youth and bringing them into the fold of ethical trappers, it should be during the time of year furs are valuable, not the nesting period when the only value is the tail they can turn in. How does this develop ethical use of the natural resource?

Removal of 50,000 nest predators is not a scientific number and distribution of removal over a broad area will not have an effect on pheasant and duck populations. License sales have not increased over the past 10 years, and there was no spike in numbers in 2019 with the initiation of this program which included free traps and a higher bounty than proposed. I question how this will improve the ETHICS SD when the taking of these furbearers is during a non-prime period (waste of resource) for a program that will not positively impact the target populations. This is not a good way to teach the youth (20% of the targeted participants) the proper ethics of trapping.

This program is not backed up by Wildlife Science. A vast body of scientific evidence indicates that good habitat is the key to successful upland game bird populations. Winter habitat leads to good survival and a strong breeding population, nesting habitat ameliorates impacts of nest predation and leads to high reproduction, good brood rearing habitat leads to good survival and recruitment with a strong population for the hunt season and ample numbers going into winter.

This is an expensive program that removes money from the game fund to support a program that has no demonstrable impact on upland game populations, at the expense of other programs that provide habitat improvements (higher pop'ns) and access programs (increased hunter participation). This is a poor business model! Something the pheasant hunting capitol of the United States should not pursue.

Gary Brundige, PhD

Rapid City