

Public Comments

Missouri River Pierre Waterfowl Refuge

Mason Oertli

Sioux Falls SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

I strongly oppose the expansion of the Oahe Dam State Waterfowl Refuge and loss of public hunting grounds. As a first year resident SD waterfowl hunter, getting permission to hunt was the most difficult part. I have been waterfowl hunting for 10 years and have now considered leaving the sport of waterfowl hunting after moving to SD due to lack of access to areas to hunt. I scouted about 50 days this past season and was only able to hunt about 10 days based on what I observed scouting. I found spots with birds to hunt each time, I just couldn't access them due to it being private land with no hunting permission granted after talking with landowners. Most of my hunting was done on public land. Towards the end of the season I heard of the Pierre Canadian Goose program with the 30 or so fields open to the public to hunt. While I was not able to go this year due to my work schedule, I hope to make a couple trips out next year to hunt Canadian geese on these fields open to the public. It sounds like an amazing program and I think GFP should enroll the corn fields around Sioux Falls in a program like this. In conclusion, most of my hunting is done on public land and closing more hunting land to the public would definitely make me reconsider renewing my waterfowl hunting license for the upcoming season and possibly leave the sport all together, because my time is important to me and I'm not going to waste it bird watching on land I am unable to hunt.

Troy Halvorson

Valley Springs SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

This proposal seems to take away public access under the the presumption of wildlife conservation. I am an avid hunter and also want the opportunity for the public, no matter who or what financial status they hold, the opportunity to access and enjoy South Dakota's natural beauty. I believe that both side can come to something that is beneficial to all sides including the preservation of our wonderful natural wildlife. Please reconsider your proposal and form a panel that representatives from all sides can make this better. Thank You for your time reading this and your commitment to the betterment of or state.

Aaron Semmler

Fort Pierre SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

I have hunted waterfowl with friends and family from pass shooting to decoying on the water seasonally in the described area since I was 16. I have enjoyed countless days killing nothing just enjoying the comrodery or teaching my son or new waterfowlers patience. I RARELY have competition and sometimes make new friends by combining a spread on the water or chatting with an old boy who has been hunting the bluffs since the goose limit was 1. I am aware that there are not thousands of hunters that frequent the area in question. It seems though that the proposal would prevent the guys who are really getting out and enjoying the public opportunities provided by this great state to do just that. Giving us less options to teach and more options to pay for a lesson in killing, not an outdoor adventure in hunting.

The true intentions are vague, and if you say "resting area" clearly you have not been out this year. There were more geese resting on the ice on the Missouri between Peoria Flatts and Sutton Bay than there were in your proposed area of open water. To be honest if you want to prevent the unnecessary disruption of their natural state,, stop the fisherman from from boating through there from Nov-March. Good Luck. I actually had a encounter that will prove my point, the picture submitted shows a E biker out on the east side of the lake north past Corps Bay. I was hunting from the bluff and had shot a couple geese not scaring the birds on the east shore of the lake below me. When all of a sudden the geese started to head from open water out to sit on the ice. Bay after Bay started out on the ice. I assumed coyote or a hunter got to close! Nope just a guy riding his bike along shore, he could have been walking his dog as far as the point is concerned its public ground.

I would be deeply saddened if I was unable to share the same moments with my son, that I was able to share with my father. In teaching that the hunt is challenging and unique to our location and how lucky we are to have all these opportunities in our area. I live in the Pierre area for one reason only, Public land opportunities! From the Grasslands to corps ground, walk in areas and waterfowl production I am truly blessed to be a part of this. Seems interesting that you need my name and info to put on public record,yet only refer,as I could find, to the proposers as a local group!

Just in case it does not transfer my name is Aaron Semmler and I hunt waterfowl religiously in the area that you are proposing to make a refuge.

Thank you for the consideration.

Cody Hodson

Rapid City SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

The Commission and GFP work so hard to create and maintain public hunting opportunities. Why are we proposing to take them away, especially when there is no biological evidence?

Black Hills Sportsman's Club Bhsc

Rapid City SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Dear Commission

The Black Hills Sportsman Club is in strong opposition to the expansion and modification of the Oahe Dam waterfowl refuge. This proposal will eliminate miles of public hunting opportunity with no documented biological proof of benefit to the waterfowl. So with that statement being said you have to ask what is the reason for expansion of the refuge?

The SDGFP core mission is the 3R's and we cannot seem to find where this proposal meets any of the R's. The hunting industry needs all the help we can get. Approving this proposal will only benefit a select few outfitters and eliminate opportunity for 1000's of new and old hunters.

We all know how hard the Commission and the GFP work to create public hunting opportunities. Why are we trying to take them away?

Please vote no on this proposal.

Thank you for your time

Cody Hodson
President, Black Hills Sportsman's Club

Pat Rohl

Pierre SD

Position: support

Comment:

You can't have boats going up and down the river in the winter because it scares all the geese off of it. The weather keeps the water open later every year. This year the water froze and we had lots of geese and lots of hunters. Billy Floyd's land that is open for all had great goose hunting this year because the water froze and no boats. You can have 50 miles of shoreline to hunt but if there are no geese than what good is that to anyone.

Alan Thomas

Huron SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Please do not pass the change to the Oahe Waterfowl Refuge which will block waterfowl hunting on 3,000 acres of public land and 50 miles of shoreline. I lived in Pierre from Feb. 1977 until August 4, 2008 and utilized that area extensively for waterfowl hunting. Since moving to Huron my friends and I have utilized the area and find it a very important area for us. Most are over 70 and I would hope that a Commission with good South Dakota values would keep this area as is for our children and grandchildren. Respect the work that was done in 2002 by the working group.

Please do not approve the proposed refuge.

Thank you,

Alan Thomas
Huron, South Dakota

Don Behrns

Bruce SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Don't believe we need to create more refuge Closing public land is only the beginning of take aways that involve state and local governments Helping the commercialization of our public resources Definite No for me

Douglas Flory

Black Hawk SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

The refuge area we have already covers enough area to hold the birds that come into our area. More refuge would only inhibit the opportunities for waterfowl hunting.

Steve Arbogast

Watertown SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Please don't take away more public hunting. Public hunting is the only way I get to hunt. I really enjoy all the public land.

Steve Arbogast

Watertown SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Please don't take away more public hunting land. Public land is the only places I hunt. The GFP does a terrific job on public land.

James Eichinger

Watertown SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Leave Refuge As is. Do not increase size of refuge. This discriminates against boat hunters that currently hunt in the proposed refuge (me) as well as pass shooting near the water, which I also do. You are planning to make The publics hunting area into a refuge. NO!

Clifton Stone

Chamberlain AZ

Position: oppose

Comment:

The only thing this proposal will accomplish is to reduce hunting opportunity.

Nancy Hilding

Black Hawk, SD

Position: support

Comment:

Nancy Hilding
President
Prairie Hills Audubon Society
P.O. Box 788
Black Hawk, SD 57718

I attach our letter in support of the Pierre Missouri River Bottomlands Important Bird Area, located within the Missouri River Pierre Waterfowl Refuge proposal - as a Refuge in SD.

Other

Joe Hockett

Winner SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

I am opposed to the goose refuge proposal near Pierre. I and a lot of my retired buddies have hunted geese in the proposed boundary of this refuge for over 50 years. In fact most of the hunters within this boundary are elderly. They enjoy traveling into Pierre, staying at a local motel, eating at local restaurants and walking near the river to maybe get a shot at a goose. They will never pay a guide to set in a pit because that is not what brings them into Pierre. They enjoy getting out in nature, sitting on a log and listen to the geese chatter on the river. To close off this proposed area would force almost all the elderly who drive into Pierre to goose hunt to hang up their shotguns. That would be a travesty and certainly not in the best interests of the public. Public access to this vital goose hunting area far outweighs any other reason for the closure. Everyone in the state who goose hunts knows full well that this is an attempt by the Pierre area goose guides to enhance their bottom line at the expense of our states elderly goose hunters. In one sense this proposal could be viewed as age discrimination. Please think about these comments as you move forward.

Penny Larrett

Hot Springs SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

The Nest Predator county Program--is despicable and horrible to even consider!! Teaching children to kill small animals is monstrous!!

Wayne Earl

Hot Springs SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Please note that the Nest Predator Bounty Program is Monstrous-----teaching children to kill small animals for *Bounty-----is horrible!!! Stop this NOW!!

Nancy Hilding

Black Hawk, SD

Position: support

Comment:

Moratorium on Beaver Trapping/Hunting Black Hills

Prairie Hills Audubon Society supports a three year moratorium on beaver hunting/trapping in the Black Hills Fire Protection District.

There are too few beaver left in the Black Hills. Beaver are a keystone species. They create riparian, aquatic and wetlands habitat. They redesign land-forms, raising the water table. They increase ground water and surface water, saving it in the local area and delaying it's departure for the Missouri River and the ocean. The Black Hills National Forest recognized its' importance by making it a Management Indicator Species.

SD law allows landowners with conflicts with beaver to call up Game, Fish and Parks and get permission to kill a conflict beaver. A moratorium on recreational hunting/trapping won't prevent folks from removing conflict beaver.

Thanks,

Nancy Hilding

Nancy Hilding

Black Hawk SD

Position: oppose

Comment:

Nancy Hilding

President

Prairie Hills Audubon Society

P.O. Box 788

Black Hawk, SD 57718

Feb 27th, 2022

We oppose proceeding with buying the proposed shooting complex property at Meade County off Elk Vale Rd at this time. We fear the site may be too hilly to adequately provide of control of lead, especially in the north unit. We believe there will be many other adverse environmental impacts. The draft EA is totally inadequate and does not support a FONSI. We doubt you have figured out the true cost yet, because you have not factored in the full costs of environmental mitigation,

You should wait to purchase until after the National Environmental Policy Act review is complete and the USFWS issues a FONSI or a ROD, so you can adequately understand all the costs, of this site.

Thanks,

Nancy Hilding

President

PHAS

To who this may concern,

It was recently brought to our attention that the "Buryanek Rule", making it illegal to throw back walleye during the winter months was coming into question. The specialized law targets the deeper water of Lake Francis Case near the Platte-Winner Bridge and south. Walleye congregate off the old channel adjacent to old cotton wood trees covered up with water in the 1950s. Generally speaking, the walleye follow gizzard shad and other prey into these deeper areas of the river. Most years the fish are caught in 30-50 feet of water. This law was initiated at the Civic Center in Burke, SD a couple decades ago. The thought behind this special rule was that mortality rates were being affected as fisherman would catch smaller walleye and throw them back wishing to catch larger fish. Although the fish seemed to swim away fine, many times their air sac were out of their mouth. Studies shown that many of these fish would die hours later because they were not able to readjust their air bladders.

Some say that this rule invites fisherman to hide in their shacks and throw small fish back, so why have this rule in place anyway? That does not seem like sound reasoning. Wouldn't a stronger GFP presence help this situation? We have to start thinking about conservation and sustainability of this important resource. South Dakota is known for two main things to outdoorsmen across the country; pheasant hunting and walleye fishing! And our pheasant hunting has changed considerably, many saying for the worse.

So who is going to look after the walleye on Lake Francis Case? There is no such thing as "off time" for our state game fish! It is not an unlimited resource as many seem to think. We had the NWT fishing our reservoir during the spawn last year! If we want to sustain our walleye fishery, we have to do things to help it out. If that means losing some business in the short term, to help in the long term so be it.

We have been spoiled with some decent spawns the past few years, but we all know that with the dry conditions we are due for some poor reproductive cycles. You couple that with social media, improved electronics, and fishing techniques, not to mention the influx of campgrounds growing each summer adjacent to our river. All of these factors create the possibility of some lean years in the future. Our local businesses that depend on fishing, are going to suffer. Let's try to find ways to be progressive in assisting our walleye, not making it more difficult.

Please strongly considering keeping our current regulations in tact concerning walleye harvest during the winter months in Lake Francis Case.

Sincerely,

Concerned fisherman of Burke, SD

Mike Sebern, Wade Broome, and Vern Witt

Comes, Rachel

From: Beatis <beatis@aol.com>
Sent: Friday, February 25, 2022 10:01 AM
To: Spring, Charles; Sharp, Doug; Locken, Jon; Bartling, Julie A (GFP); locken@nrctv.com; Comes, Rachel; Whitmyre, Robert; Olson, Russell; Rissler, Stephanie; Bies, Travis; Robling, Kevin (GFP); Kirschenmann, Tom
Subject: [EXT] No on refuge petition

Dear Commission Members

Please vote no on the refuge petition. This will close the river to hunting from Spring Creek all the way down to farm island. This removes hunting and recreation from many current users in the guise it will help the goose population. They currently have plenty of refuge. The issue of low geese numbers has little to do with them being pressured. There are so many other factors affecting water fowl hunting in SD that are beyond our control. Adding more refuge is not the answer and will do nothing but hurt the current opportunity sportsmen have to hunt this area.

Thanks for your time

Jeff Olson
Rapid City



Nancy Hilding
President
Prairie Hills Audubon Society
P.O. Box 788
Black Hawk, SD 57718
Feb 27th, 2022

SD Game, Fish and Parks Commission
Joe Foss Building
523 East Capitol
Pierre, SD 57501

Dear Commission,

RE: Proposed rule on Missouri River (Pierre) Waterfowl Refuge

**Letter of support for assigning a new status of Waterfowl or State Game Bird
Refuge to the
SD Important Bird Area - the Pierre Missouri River Bottomlands**

The National Audubon Society has designated a part of the proposed Missouri River (Pierre) Waterfowl Refuge as a South Dakota Important Bird Area (IBA). Here are hyperlinks to learn more about that designation.

<https://www.audubon.org/important-bird-areas/pierre-missouri-river-bottomlands>

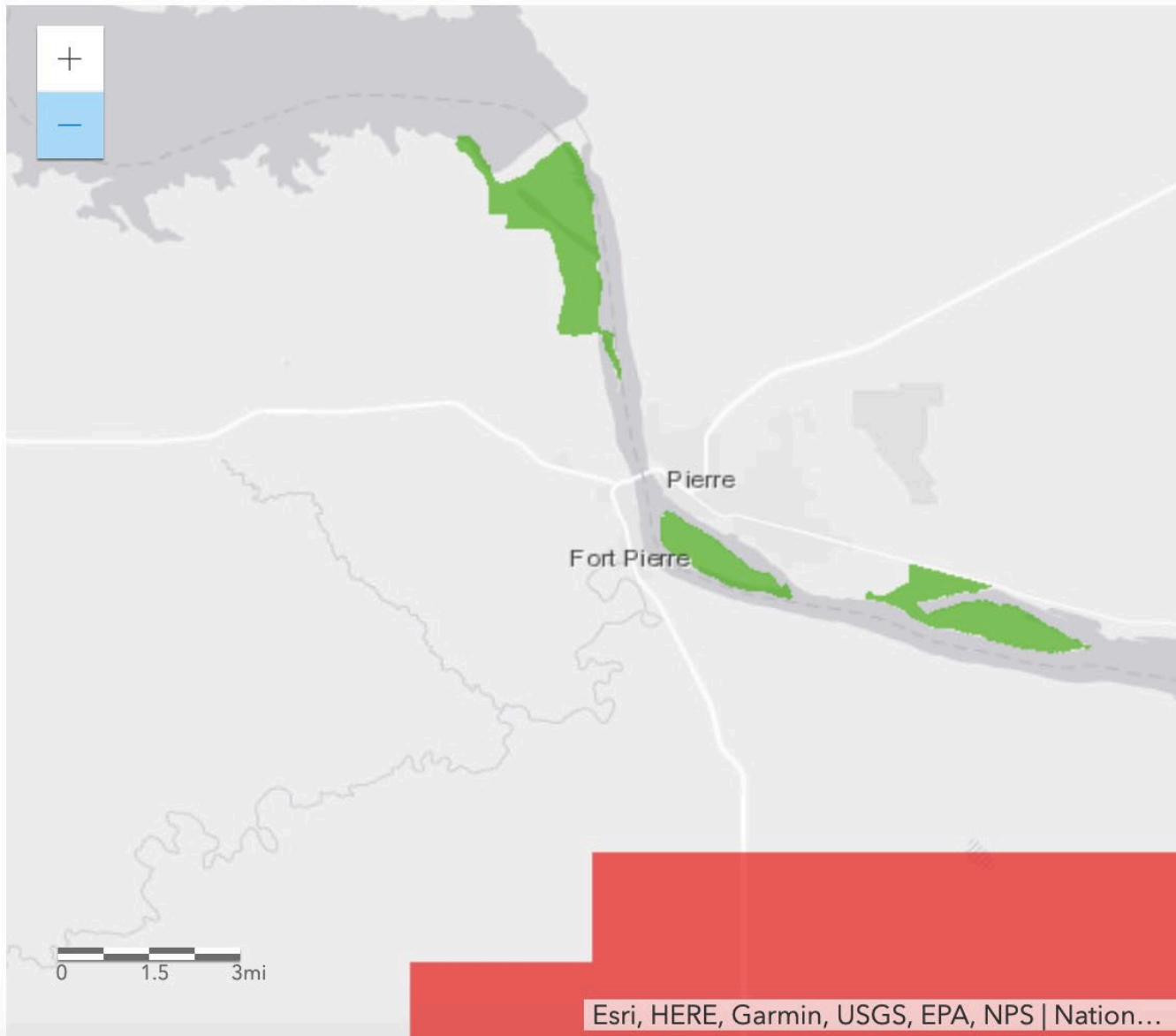
<https://netapp.audubon.org/iba/Reports/4973>

We support a waterfowl, state game bird and/or state game refuge status for the IBA. At this time, we are neutral on the designation of the rest of the area proposed as the Missouri River (Pierre) Waterfowl Refuge, as we don't know enough about it.

If this turns out to be controversial & compromise is desired, please consider an alternative where you designate of subset of the proposed area as a Refuge, but not the entire proposal.

Pierre Missouri River Bottomland

South Dakota



Esri, HERE, Garmin, USGS, EPA, NPS | Nation...

These numbers are worrying

Thanks,
Nancy Hilding

President
Prairie Hills Audubon Society