

MINUTES OF THE SOUTH DAKOTA ANNUAL WEED & PEST CONTROL COMMISSION MEETING
September 10, 2025 – 1:00 pm CT
Davison County Fairgrounds Complex, 3200 West Havens, Mitchell, SD

Chairman Darwin Kurtenbach called the meeting to order at 1:03 pm.

Members Present: Commissioners Dennis Feickert, Bruce Helbig, Darwin Kurtenbach, Chuck Anderson, Deb Schultz, Association of SD County Commissioners Representative Lynn Deibert; Department of Transportation Representative Christina Bennett; Game Fish & Parks representative Ryan Wendinger; and School and Public Lands representative Brock Greenfield. Non-Voting Members - SD Department of Agriculture representative Bill Smith; SDSU Representative Eric Jones; and Commission Secretary and Plant Industry Program Manager Brenda Sievers. (Exhibit #1)

Lynn Deibert made a motion to approve the agenda (Exhibit #2). Seconded by Bruce Helbig. Motion carried.

Chairman Kurtenbach asked for any changes to the minutes from the April 9, 2025, meeting. A motion was made by Deb Schultz to approve the minutes as printed. Seconded by Ryan Wendinger. Motion carried.

Activity Reports

Weed & Pest Coordinator's Report – Department of Agriculture & Natural Resources

Brenda Sievers reported that the emerald ash borer (EAB) was detected in June in both Grant and Codington counties. Since there was a firewood provider in Codington County, the EAB quarantine was going to affect his business. The business built a kiln to heat treat their firewood. Since South Dakota didn't have a program to certify firewood, Sievers reported that a program was put into place, involving a compliance agreement and temperature probes to verify that the internal temperature of the firewood was reaching 140° for 60 minutes. The business was officially certified in August and will be labeling his firewood as certified. Though it was a lot of work, the business owner was able to continue conducting business not only in Codington County but can now move his firewood outside that county and serve other areas. Sievers also introduced Grace Bedford, CAPS State Survey Coordinator, who started her position in Rapid City on June 2. Grace will present her reports later in the agenda.

Brock Greenfield joined the meeting.

Weed & Pest Program Specialist Report – Department of Agriculture & Natural Resources

Jeremiah Phelps reported on issues seen this summer by the counties. Ziebach County had prairie dog complaints, and Jeremiah is working with Bennett County on their palmer amaranth complaints. He is meeting with the weed board next week. In Lawrence County, there have been several complaints about noxious weed inside the city of Spearfish. Jeremiah has been working with them since the county weed board does not usually act on problems within city limits. Jeremiah mentioned that there has been a lot of Canada thistle throughout the state, but for the most part, the counties are working on the issues, and we really have not received complaints on state property.

District Reports

District reports were given by Dennis Feickert, District 1 – his area has received lots of rain, and only 50% of the wheat has been harvested in Spink County, with the rest under water. Yellow toadflax has really showed up and it is tough to keep up with the weeds. Feickert is concerned that as counties work on budgets, he is hoping they will keep funds for the weed boards. Darwin Kurtenbach, District 2 – phragmites has increased in his area, as well as snow on the mountain. He hasn't seen as much Canada thistle. District 2 was dry until July and then moisture hit. Grasshoppers affected some corn and soybean fields. Kurtenbach worked at several shows and had good questions. Bruce Helbig, District 3 – since he also does crop adjusting, he has seen wheat streak mosaic virus in western counties, and sunflower seed head weevil in sunflowers. Canada thistle was more prevalent in his area and grasshoppers have been an issue. Chuck Anderson, District 4 – his area has received almost twice their normal rainfall this year. Canada thistle has exploded in Perkins County, especially later growth. They did get a frost a five days ago. The southern end of his district received more average rainfall. Deb Schultz, At Large – The southwest

part of Spink County was dry early, but areas just further north and east have been flooded. The grasshoppers started showing up a month ago, and Canada thistle seems late, though not as bad as previous years. They have had leafy spurge bio control in the Tulare in the past.

Department of Game Fish & Parks

Ryan Wendinger reported they had a typical year and sprayed 8,000 acres on game production areas. They are still planning to fall spray and talked about the leafy spurge bio control collected in Edmunds County and moved around. The southeast part of the state had some new grass plantings, and they are focusing on keeping the weeds out. They are also working on wild parsnip in northeast South Dakota.

School and Public Lands

Brock Greenfield talked about the large-scale grasshopper control done the last couple years that they have been involved with. Most of their budget has been spent to control prairie dogs, grasshoppers and other weeds, to do their part to be a good neighbor.

Department of Transportation

Christina Bennett reported about \$481,000 was spent on weed spraying efforts. They are working on fall spraying and have a few issues they need to address. They are planning to make improvements to contracts. In October, there will be fall maintenance meetings and they plan to do certification at that time.

SDSU

Eric Jones that there is a new Department head, Karen Sanguinet. Dr. Graig Reicks is the Extension Weed Ecologist and deals with lawn and garden, non-crop as well as some range and pasture items. Eric stated it is difficult to get new field trial locations. They are doing 10-20 extension newsletters, updating the range and pasture as well as the noxious management pamphlets.

Association of SD County Commissioners

Lynn Deibert just completed the commissioner convention in Pierre. Some counties are doing away with their county weed boards and the county commission is now the weed board. There was a freeze in his area. Lynn also stated they have had some organic producers with weed problems. He mentioned invasive grasses and difficulties with those in western South Dakota.

APHIS

Mike Stenson talked about the spongy moth project and there was one positive find in Lawrence County. The grasshopper survey has been completed with a flat trend in 2025, due to the acres treated the previous two years. There will be an environmental assessment for the grasshopper program. Mike talked about the EAB bio control. Releases were done in Dakota Doones and Watertown. They are hoping to get approval for releases in Milbank and Watertown for 2026.

Department of Agriculture & Natural Resources

Bill Smith, Division Director of Resource Conservation & Forestry, reported on Forest Service pass through weed and pest funds. There is usually \$15,000 to 30,000 available. Bill talked about the watershed protection program and the increased calls for the harmful algal blooms in late summer. He also talked about the Riparian Buffer Initiative and the ARPA funds statewide program.

Bio Control

Jeremiah Phelps gave an update on the bio control program and the work on yellow toadflax with *Rhinusa pilosa*, which we did not receive any releases in 2024. Monitoring the sites continued in 2025. We are still working with Montana State University to get releases. We will not receive any CAPS funding in 2026 and will limit our work on this project. For leafy spurge, there were three landowner collections held in 2025.

Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey

Grace Bedford, CAPS State Survey Coordinator, was welcomed by the group. She mentioned that all traps retrieved so far have been negative. We still are retrieving Karnal bunt samples, due to the late harvest.

Public Comment Period

Chairman Kurtenbach opened the meeting for public comments. There were no comments received.

A break was declared at 2:15 pm. The meeting reconvened at 2:27 pm.

Old Business

DakotaFest

Jeremiah Phelps reported receiving relevant questions the day he worked at DakotaFest. Brenda Sievers also worked, as did Darwin Kurtenbach, Gary Pribyl and Tyler Page. Gary reported registrations were down.

Brown County Fair

Jeremiah Phelps and Brenda Sievers reported receiving good questions at the Brown County Fair. The booth is mostly manned by Brown County Weed Board staff. Gary reported that registrations received were up.

State Fair

Jeremiah Phelps, Brenda Sievers, Darwin Kurtenbach, Tyler, Page, Gary Pribyl, Eric Jones and other weed supervisors worked at the booth and were present at the meeting. Many good questions were received, and it is a busy booth. Thanks go to SDSU – especially Dave Vos and Jill Alms, for supporting the program and digging plants, as well as to those who worked at the booth.

New Business

Custer County Letter – Request Change on FY2026 Grant Expenditures

A letter was received from Custer County asking to allow seasonal labor as an approved expenditure for their contractual/regular grant WP-26-21, which began on July 1, 2025. Discussion was held on the request. A motion was made by Dennis Feickert to deny Custer County's request to add seasonal labor as an approved expenditure to grant WP-26-21. Seconded by Deb Schultz. Motion carried.

Letter of Support for SDSU

Bruce Helbig explained there is serious competition and challenges for research dollars, and he thought a letter of support might help SDSU Weed Program secure additional funds. Discussion was held at length about the possibility of sending such a letter. There was no action taken.

Commission Fall Tours

Brenda Sievers asked the question if the Commission wanted to continue to have fall tours. In 2026, the tour is scheduled for District 3, and it isn't required by statute. Discussion was held and many comments were made. A motion was made by Dennis Feickert to have the Commission decide at their February 2026 meeting whether or not to have a 2026 fall tour. Seconded by Deb Schultz. Motion carried.

Annual Review of State Open Meeting Laws

The Commission members received a copy of the Attorney General's document Conducting the Public's Business in Public. Bill Smith talked about the Open Meeting Law changes after the 2025 legislative session. SB74 amended the Attorney General's duties to include publishing open meeting information. Smith read through the document for all board members and answered questions they had. A motion was made by Lynn Deibert that the commission acknowledge and accept the document Conducting the Public's Business in Public. Seconded by Chuck Anderson. Motion carried.

Grant Criteria for FY2027

The grant criteria for the FY2027 fiscal year were discussed. The Commission has \$500,000 for spending authority. Brenda Sievers gave an overview of the changes presented, including updated dates on the criteria for the upcoming Weed & Pest Conference. Sievers then suggested additional changes to the criteria, including items that haven't been allowed, such as other licensed vehicles, removing coffee as an allowable item since the state no longer allows it for reimbursement, adding in the word "Control" to the Commission's name since that is the official name of the

Commission in statute, and underlining purchasing equipment is discouraged in the competitive criteria. In the contractual/regular grant criteria, making the language the same as the competitive grant for items not permitted. Also, adding into the contractual/regular grant criteria a statement that only herbicides for noxious weed control are permitted and products labeled as bare ground are not allowed, with any exceptions on a case-by-case basis. Lynn Deibert suggested not underlining the words purchasing equipment is discouraged in the competitive criteria.

A motion was made by Deb Schultz, seconded by Christina Bennett, to approve the regular/contractual grant criteria as presented, including the changes that Sievers suggested. Motion carried. Project requirements will remain as in the past, which includes meeting attendance, report requirements and includes language that in the event that a county or counties don't qualify for funding, the remaining funds will be divided equally to the nearest \$100, amongst those remaining counties that have met the requirements, without exceeding spending authority.

A motion was made by Ryan Wendinger, seconded by Chuck Anderson, to approve the competitive grant criteria as presented, including the changes that Sievers suggested. Motion carried. Lynn Deibert opposed. Project requirements will remain as in the past, which includes meeting attendance and report requirements.

Spending authority was discussed. A total of \$500,000 is available to grant out. A motion was made by Chuck Anderson, seconded by Ryan Wendinger, to allow \$150,000 for competitive grants and \$350,000 for regular/contractual grants. Motion carried.

Chairman Kurtenbach reported on the salt cedar areas toured in western South Dakota in Meade and Pennington counties. Bill Smith, Jeremiah Phelps, Brenda Sievers and Kurtenbach toured the areas in July.

Weed & Pest Conference 2026

The 2026 Conference will be held February 18-20, 2026, in Deadwood at The Lodge. Chuck Anderson and Deb Schultz offered to assist at the Conference.

Approval of Bills

A motion was made by Bruce Helbig, seconded by Dennis Feickert, to pay the meeting expenses, salary and per diem for meetings attended. Motion carried.

Chairman Kurtenbach declared the meeting adjourned at 4:30 pm.

Brenda Sievers
Commission Secretary

Darwin W. Kurtenbach, Commission Chairman
(Approved Minutes)