

MINUTES OF THE SOUTH DAKOTA ANNUAL WEED & PEST CONTROL COMMISSION MEETING
September 15, 2026 – 10:30 am CT
Matthews Training Center, Foss Bldg., 523 E Capitol Ave., Pierre, SD

Chairman Dennis Feickert called the meeting to order at 10:34 am.

Members Present: Commissioners Darren Bauer, Darwin Kurtenbach, Dennis Feickert, Deb Schultz, Chuck Anderson; Department of Transportation representative Christina Bennett; Game Fish & Parks representative Ryan Wendinger; and School and Public Lands representative Brock Greenfield. Non-Voting Members - Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources representative Bill Smith; South Dakota State University representative Eric Jones; and Commission Secretary and Plant Industry Program Manager Brenda Sievers.

Darwin Kurtenbach made a motion to approve the agenda. Seconded by Christina Bennett. Roll Call: Anderson – yes; Bauer – yes; Bennett – yes; Greenfield – yes; Kurtenbach – yes; Schultz – yes; Wendinger – yes. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Darren Bauer, seconded by Ryan Wendinger, to approve the minutes of the April 20 meeting. Roll Call: Anderson – yes; Bauer – yes; Bennett – yes; Greenfield – yes; Kurtenbach – yes; Schultz – yes; Wendinger – yes. Motion carried.

Activity Reports

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

Brenda Sievers reported that Grace Bedford, State Survey Coordinator for the Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey (CAPS) program, took a position with USDA effective August 28. Plans are to advertise for that position soon, with hopes to hire an individual to work in Pierre or east river. We have had multiple complaints for prairie dogs and some noxious weeds. Jeremiah has dealt with those and can give that report.

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

Jeremiah Phelps reported on complaints received, which many are neighbor issues. Many of the prairie dog complaints are in development areas that were placed in pastures. He's been working with the counties to make progress in these areas. There's been a lot of turnover in the counties and county commissions are taking over as the weed board.

District Reports

District reports were given by Dennis Feickert, District 1 – he's noticed more yellow toadflax in the area, with some in road ditches too. There are good crops in this area but noticed outside his area it is much worse; Darwin Kurtenbach, District 2 – reported that some fields are good and others are already cut, there is storm damage in his area with the corn twisted and that will make it difficult to combine, it has been very dry so not as many weeds this year with no complaints received, phragmites is getting worse, and he's noticed more common mullein in eastern South Dakota; Darren Bauer, District 3 – also does work as a crop adjuster, the moisture varies greatly even in just small distances, has noticed more Canada thistle but didn't notice as much leafy spurge, he has a lot of maretail in his area though it isn't noxious; Chuck Anderson, District 4 – reported his area is in pretty good shape but further south it isn't as good, a lot of the small grain was put up for hay, in the southwest part of the state it is pretty dire with no feed and many have turned out their cattle into the winter pastures already and are feeding, they've seen a lot of Canada thistle including in ROWs, as well as houndstongue in spots; and Deb Schultz, At Large – reported her immediate area in southern Spink County is dry but further east near Carpenter there are soybeans in standing water, has noticed Canada thistle regrowth this fall.

Department of Transportation

Christina Bennett reported that DOT spent \$1.95 million in the previous fiscal year for weed spraying and that included contractual, labor and chemical. So far in FY2027, they spent almost \$339,000 for weed spraying efforts.

This amount is mostly non-interstate roads. They can do joint powers agreements with counties and are now spraying in Corson County.

Department of Game Fish & Parks

Ryan Wendinger reported they have sprayed about 10,000 acres this summer, which is typical for them. There have been a few complaints. In north central South Dakota, they had dry lake beds that were an issue. In central South Dakota, goats were used for spurge, with plans to fall apply herbicides. In the west, the GPA's were cleaner this year, but due to drought conditions, had concerns about starting fires. Weeds such as houndstongue and wild parsnip have shown up in areas. They are also clipping high diversity plantings.

School and Public Lands

Commissioner Brock Greenfield reported that they have had modest requests for weed control, which could mean potential additions funds to the Weed and Pest Fund next year if they go over the maximum allowed in their fund balance. The overage would be transferred to the weed and pest fund. After grasshopper controls last year, Brock wasn't sure the fund would bounce back so quickly.

Department of Agriculture & Natural Resources

Bill Smith, Division Director of Resource Conservation & Forestry, reported on federal grants and they need to be pre approved for forest service. Bill also talked about harmful algae blooms and the calls received especially after a TV story was published. Bill gave an overview of current staffing and the State Conservation Commission would be meeting next week in Chamberlain.

SDSU

Eric Jones reported that multiple herbicide test plots were hayed or sprayed out, though they had permission to do studies at those sites. He is preparing for an independent crop consultant meeting which will involve people from across the US. EPA will be making mandatory buffer requirements, which will hopefully not change how we manage weeds when the point system is implemented.

USDA APHIS-PPQ

Mike Stenson reported on emerald ash borer (EAB) bio control which took place this year in Dakota Dunes, Watertown, and Milbank. He also reported that spongy moth traps are being pulled now. They had two seasonals who conducted grasshopper surveys. There were a few hot spots but nothing widespread like in previous years. Japanese beetle at the Sioux Falls airport is low so they are not monitoring.

CAPS Update

Brenda Sievers talked about the interns completing their duties and with Grace Bedford leaving, full-time staff will continue to pick up remaining traps and Karnal bunt samples. Small grain survey was conducted in 2026. Grace worked on the spreadsheet for information, but Jeremiah will assist in putting the remaining information into that. Jeremiah Phelps informed the group of the additional Japanese beetle trapped in 2026, which Brenda reported that may take us to a category 3 state instead of our current category 2. Paul Johnson, former entomologist with SDSU, assists us with species identification as needed for the survey work.

Public Comment Period

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

Old Business

DakotaFest

Brenda Sievers, Jeremiah Phelps and Darwin Kurtenbach reported that they worked at the weed booth. Attendance and questions were good but fell off the final day.

Brown County Fair

Jeremiah Phelps and Brenda Sievers reported they both worked a day during the week at the weed booth. Though not as busy as a weekend would be, attendance was good and many questions were answered. Wild parsnip was asked about in Brown County and their staff is aware of the location with plans to continue treating it.

State Fair

Jeremiah Phelps, Brenda Sievers, Darwin Kurtenbach and Eric Jones reported that State Fair attendance was good, though a few days were hot outside, but many questions were answered.

New Business

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 2026. Bill Smith reviewed the document with the Commission. A motion was made by Darwin Kurtenbach that the commission acknowledge their review of the document "Conducting the Public's Business in Public". Seconded by Ryan Wendinger. Roll Call: Anderson – yes; Bauer – yes; Bennett – yes; Greenfield – yes; Kurtenbach – yes; Schultz – yes; Wendinger – yes. Motion carried.

Grant Criteria for FY2028

The grant criteria for the FY2028 fiscal year were discussed. The Commission has \$600,000 spending authority. Brenda Sievers gave an overview of the changes presented on the documents, which included updated dates and fiscal years. Brenda suggested additional updates to the criteria, including language in both grant criteria about who would qualify for attendance at the Weed and Pest Conference and better defining the contractual criteria regarding what is considered part of a weed board having their own program, including items not eligible for reimbursement. Ryan suggested to add in an email address to the document, and to use the same language for mailing the application for both criteria – changing the word "sent" to "mailed" in the contractual application. Language to add into both criteria for meeting attendance is "A federal or state employee representing their respective agency will not qualify as a county representative at meetings. Exception - SD Weed and Pest Control Commission members will be allowed to represent their respective county." Language to add into the contractual criteria on a county funding their own program is "Per statute 38-22-38, a project is eligible to receive funds only if the county in which the project occurs has funded its own weed and pest program. Funding your own program includes but is not limited to hiring a weed supervisor, having a weed board, purchasing a truck or other licensed vehicles to spray with, training/applicator costs for their supervisor and sprayers, and a building to operate out of. Examples of items not reimbursable include supervisor's salary, benefits or per diem, board members' salary or per diem, commercial applicator training or license costs, fuel, tires, batteries, insurance, building costs, licensed vehicle purchases including UTV's and ATV's, and Weed & Pest Conference costs."

Spending authority was also discussed. A total of \$600,000 is available to grant out for FY2028. A motion was made by Chuck Anderson, seconded by Christina Bennett, to allow \$150,000 for competitive grants and \$450,000 for regular/contractual grants. Roll Call: Anderson – yes; Bauer – yes; Bennett – yes; Greenfield – yes; Kurtenbach – yes; Schultz – yes; Wendinger – yes. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Brock Greenfield, seconded by Ryan Wendinger, to approve the regular/contractual grant criteria as presented, including the changes that Brenda and commission members suggested. Brenda reviewed the full changes to the criteria. Roll Call: Anderson – yes; Bauer – yes; Bennett – yes; Greenfield – yes; Kurtenbach – yes; Schultz – yes; Wendinger – yes. 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 Brock Greenfield, seconded by Chuck Anderson, to approve the competitive grant criteria as presented, including the changes that Brenda suggested. Brenda reviewed the full changes to the criteria. Roll Call: Anderson – yes; Bauer – yes; Bennett – yes; Greenfield – yes; Kurtenbach – yes; Schultz – yes; Wendinger – yes. Motion carried. Project requirements will remain as in the past, which includes meeting attendance and report requirements.

Weed & Pest Conference 2027

The 2027 Weed and Pest Conference will be held February 24-26 at the Best Western Ramkota Hotel in Aberdeen. The Commission Meeting will be held on Wednesday morning, February 24. It was decided to begin the Commission Meeting at 8:30 am that morning.

Grant Review Committee

Chairman Feickert appointed the following to the grant review committee, meeting the first week of January to review the grants and recommend funding to the full Commission at the February meeting – Christina Bennett, Dennis Feickert, Chuck Anderson, Darwin Kurtenbach, Bill Smith – Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources, and Eric Jones, SDSU.

Approval of Bills

A motion was made by Darwin Kurtenbach, seconded by Ryan Wendinger, to pay the meeting expenses, salary and per diem for meetings attended. Roll Call: Anderson – yes; Bauer – yes; Bennett – yes; Greenfield – yes; Kurtenbach – yes; Schultz – yes; Wendinger – yes. Motion carried.

With no further business, Chairman Feickert declared the meeting adjourned at 12:37 pm.

Brenda Sievers
Commission Secretary

Dennis Feickert, Commission Chairman
(Approved Minutes)