

SOUTH DAKOTA GFP Introduces Smartphone App for Licenses, Reservations and Information

The South Dakota Game Fish and Parks Department has unveiled an application for Android smartphones.

The program will allow users to access GFP hunting, fishing and camping information and will enable Android phone owners to purchase general hunting and fishing licenses, apply for big game licenses, make campground reservations in state parks, and access the South Dakota Public Hunting maps using the phone's GPS (global positioning system) functionality.

"Outdoor enthusiasts are some of the most technically savvy people out there," said Chris Marsh, GIS (geographical information systems) specialist with GFP. "They want GPS maps, the ability to buy licenses and make campground arrangements on the fly. This free app will provide Android phone users instant information about these things. They can also check current regulations in our hunting and fishing handbooks."

Marsh is currently working on other smartphone applications, which should be appearing soon.

"Each company has their own programming, software and permissions that need to be worked through," Marsh said. "Ultimately, we want to

provide this information to all smartphone users."

The app can be found at: https://market.android.com/details?id=com.gfptab&feature=search_result

Goose Hunting C-O-R-R- E-C-T-I-O-N-S

The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department is asking that individuals who will be goose hunting in Perkins County this fall be aware of a misprint in the 2011 Hunting Handbook.

On page 22 of the Handbook, Perkins County is listed under both Unit 1 and Unit 2 Canada Goose hunting units. Perkins County is not part of Unit 1 and should only be listed under Unit 2.

The season dates for hunting Canada Geese in Perkins County is Oct. 29 to Feb. 10.

In addition, the Wall Lake Game Bird Refuge in Hand County should be included as part of the listing of state refuges on page 55.

Pheasant Counts Decline From Historic Highs, But Still Good

Pheasant brood counts indicate that pheasant numbers in South Dakota have returned to levels below the remarkable high counts of the past few years.

However, the pheasant population in the main part of the state's pheasant range will still provide quality hunting op-

portunities.

From 2003 through 2010, the statewide pheasant-per-mile index was at levels not seen in the previous 40 years. The index this year is 46 percent lower than the 2010 index and 41 percent lower than the average of the past 10 years.

"We observed abnormally high mortality of hen pheasants during the brutal winter of 2010-11," explained Jeff Vonk, Secretary of the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department. "The loss of that reproductive potential inhibited the ability of our pheasant population to rebound to the record levels that we have enjoyed in recent years."

Declines in the counts were consistent across the state and most pronounced in eastern South Dakota, where winter's grip was tightest and grassland nesting habitat is diminished.

"We knew this day was coming when important pheasant habitats provided by the cover in Conservation Reserve Program fields were lost," Vonk said.

CRP enrollments in the state are currently at 1.17 million acres, down from 1.56 million acres in 2007. The reduction equates to over 600 square miles of grassland habitat.

"On the other hand, we were pleasantly surprised how well pheasants responded in central South Dakota, where abundant moisture from winter snow and spring rain allowed grasslands to flourish and provide the