



South
Dakota
Division

The Izaak Walton League of America

DEFENDERS OF SOIL, AIR, WOODS, WATERS, AND WILDLIFE

November 1, 2022

Fort Pierre Ranger District
Attn: Kelly Waage
1020 North Deadwood Street
Fort Pierre, SD 57532

Dear Ms. Waage,

The South Dakota Division of the Izaak Walton League of America appreciates this opportunity to comment on the Draft Environmental Assessment for the Fishing Access Project on the Fort Pierre National Grassland.

The 116,000-acre FPNG is a tremendous asset for residents and nonresidents. Anglers have sought enhanced access to FPNG dams for years. The Division recognizes the importance of the FPNG's resources and how those resources enable more individuals and families to enjoy the great outdoors. South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks cooperatively manages the FPNG dams which supports a variety of species and year-round angling opportunities.

Support Alternative 2

After reviewing the EA, the Division supports the selection of Alternative 2, which would install four earthen fishing pods, two each at Lower Booth¹ and Sheriff dams. The fishing pods will enable anglers to get past emergent and submergent vegetation, which will improve angling opportunities for people of all ages. Alternative 2 also calls for the construction of six boat ramps, one each at Cottonwood, Lookout, Lower Booth, Sheriff, Smith, and Trophy dams.

Increased Fishing Pressure

Improved angler access may lead to increased fishing pressure on the FPNG. Added pressure might bring overharvest of larger fish, possibly resulting in having only smaller fish. The Division urges continued monitoring of these dams and, if needed, collaboration with SDGFP on specific regulations to control fish harvest and manage fish size structure. Historically, the FPNG has experienced boom-bust fish populations due to winter and summer kills from fluctuating water levels and local climatic conditions.

Access Roads

The Division supports Alternative 2's stated changes in access roads, and we urge the USFS to restore the relocated roads back to native grasses and plants. We also support the USFS clarifying FPNG maps to clearly show which roads are open for public use and access to these dams.

- 1.) Lower Booth Dam is currently breached but is scheduled to be repaired through an agreement between the USFS and SDGFP.

Cultural Resources

As this project progresses the Division encourages continued observance of the National Historic Preservation Act and additional consultation with the South Dakota State Historic Preservation Officer and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. We also support additional cultural resource inventories and consultation when and if needed.

Summary

We thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Fort Pierre National Grassland Fishing Access Project Draft Environmental Assessment. The South Dakota Division of the Izaak Walton League of America supports the selection of Alternative 2. We respectfully request to be informed on all future developments of this project.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Paul Lepisto

Regional Conservation Coordinator

Izaak Walton League of America

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- 1.) Lower Booth Dam is currently breached but is scheduled to be repaired through an agreement between the USFS and SDGFP.