



SOUTH DAKOTA
DIVISION

The Izaak Walton League of America

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

June 1, 2022

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

The South Dakota Division of the Izaak Walton League of America appreciates the opportunity to provide scoping comments on the proposed Fishing Access Project on the Fort Pierre National Grassland in central South Dakota. The Division recognizes the importance of the FPNG for anglers and hunters. FPNG dams, cooperatively managed with South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks, support a year-round fishery and provide anglers with a wide variety of species.

The Division applauds this proposal as anglers have wanted additional boat ramps and enhanced access to the FPNG dams for years. Potential boat ramp sites have been examined, and we understand that the sites that meet the criteria are included in this proposal. The Division supports construction of the six boat ramps, outlined in the scoping letter, at Cottonwood, Lookout, Lower Booth, Sheriff, Smith, and Trophy dams.

We also support construction of the four fishing pods, two each at Sheriff and Lower Booth dams. Lower Booth is currently breached but will be repaired through an agreement between the USFS and SDGFP. The proposed fishing pods will enhance angling access for people to help them get past emergent and submergent vegetation in these dams which will improve angling opportunities for adults and kids.

The Division supports the changes to the FPNG roads described in the scoping letter. Access to some dams is difficult due to the road location and/or inadequate mapping. Several existing access roads run through low-lying areas resulting in severe rutting in wet conditions. We support relocating these segments to protect water quality not only on the FPNG but for the runoff that eventually goes into the Missouri River. Relocating low-lying road segments will help reduce erosion and prevent further damage to the flora and soils of the FPNG. The proposed changes will reduce the road system in the FPNG by 1.2 miles, but all fisheries currently open to motorized use will remain accessible after the completion of the project.

We urge the USFS to restore the areas of all relocated road segments back to grassland habitat. We support the other road changes listed in the scoping letter and the steps needed to clarify FPNG maps to clearly show which roads are open for public use. We also support the proposed fencing changes for this project as stated in the scoping letter.

As the FPNG Fishing Access Project moves forward the Division encourages continued compliance with Section 106 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 ask that cultural resource inventories and consultation occur as the phases of this project are developed. We're pleased to learn that cultural resource inventories have already been conducted at some of the proposed sites.

The 116,000 acres of the Fort Pierre National Grasslands are a tremendous resource for anglers and hunters from South Dakota and around the nation. The South Dakota Division of the Izaak Walton League of America appreciates this opportunity to provide scoping comments on the Fishing Access Project. If a public forum – whether in person, by conference call, or via video conference – is scheduled, we would appreciate being invited to attend. We also ask to be kept informed on all future developments of this project.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Lepisto". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P".

Paul Lepisto
Regional Conservation Coordinator
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