South Dakota
GAME, FISH and PARKS
Landowner Survey
Design & Methods

6,373
Total sample size; landowners with >100 acres

11
Sub-strata; disproportionate random stratified sampling with post-stratification weighting

4
Waves of contact; mail survey

57%
Useable response rate; a total adjusted response rate of 63%
Hunter Survey
Design & Methods

Total sample size; Random Sample of resident deer applicants
Adjusted sample size = 3,886

Waves of contact; 3 email survey & 3 mail survey

Adjusted response rate; 2,499 responses
Landowner Demographics

96% of respondents own 160 or more acres

51% of West River respondents own more than 1,800 acres

Average acres owned: 1,546 (1,459 to 1,633)
Landowner Demographics

49% of East River respondents identified as farmers

38% of West River and Black Hills respondents identified as ranchers

Wet River respondents were more likely to identify as both farmer and rancher

Black Hills respondents were more likely to identify as neither farmer nor rancher
White-Tailed Deer Populations

41% rated the number of deer seen on their property just about right.

35% rated the number seen as too many

23% said the number seen was too few
Mule Deer Populations

36% of West River/Black Hills landowners rated the number seen as about right.

37% rated the number seen as too few.

13% rated the number seen as too many.

14% indicated mule deer were not present compared to 75% of East River Landowners.

Landowner Rating of Mule Deer Seen on Their Land in Past 5 Years
Attitudes Relative to Deer

- I worry about diseases in deer that may be transmitted to livestock.
- Deer threaten people's livelihoods by damaging private feed supplies and agricultural crops.
- Deer benefit local economies through hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities.
- I worry about deer-vehicle collisions.
- The presence of deer near my home increases my quality of life.
- Having a healthy, self-sustaining population of deer in South Dakota is important to me.
Deer Depredation

Did you experience any crop or property damage caused by deer on your land in the past 5 years?

82% of other damage was described as either vehicle collisions, garden/orchard damage, or equipment tire damage.
Severity of Damage

Landowners rated livestock feed, crop, tree, and fence damage as minor to moderate.

*Other* damage was rated as more severe.

West River landowners were more likely to rate livestock feed damage as more severe than East River Landowners.

Black Hills Landowners were more likely to rate fence and crop damage as more severe than West River and East River Landowners.
61% of South Dakota landowners do not think having more deer hunters will help reduce the deer damage on their land.

51% of South Dakota landowners do think having more deer hunters will help reduce the deer damage on their land.

There were no differences between West River and Black Hills landowners. Approx. 65% indicated more deer hunters would not help.
The majority of landowners experiencing deer damage did not request help from GFP.

Black Hills landowners were more likely to request help.

45% indicated the problem was addressed to some extent.

28% said the problem was addressed mostly or completely.

25% said the problem was not at all addressed.
Deer Hunting

48% of landowners have hunted deer over the past 5 years

58% of landowners indicated they provided free hunting access to non-family members

Self or immediate family

East River landowners (53%) were more likely than West River landowners (46%) to indicate this type of hunting

10% of landowners indicated there was no deer hunting on their land in the past year
Season Lengths

Landowners' Rating of Deer Season Lengths (Statewide)

- **Too Short**
- **Just About Right**
- **Too Long**
- **No Opinion**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deer Season</th>
<th>Percent of Landowners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East River</td>
<td>12 11 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West River</td>
<td>16 41 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archery</td>
<td>5 45 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muzzleloader</td>
<td>5 36 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Hills</td>
<td>4 35 58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>4 43 38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks)
Season Dates

Landowners' Rating of Deer Season Dates (Statewide)

- **Too Early**
- **Just About Right**
- **Too Late**
- **No Opinion**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deer Season</th>
<th>Too Early</th>
<th>Just About Right</th>
<th>Too Late</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East River</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West River</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archery</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muzzleloader</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Hills</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Landowner/Hunter Conflicts

A Majority of landowners have experienced these conflicts on their land.

86% of landowners indicated they experienced trespass by deer hunters.

West River and Black Hills landowners were more likely than East River landowners to experience some of the conflicts.
Landowner/Hunter Conflicts

Moderate Problems - illegal road hunting & trespass

4 of 7 - West River & Black Hills landowners were more likely than East River landowners to rank higher some conflicts
Reduction Strategies

**Lengthen the Regular Firearm Deer Season**

- **51%**
  - Support lengthening the regular firearm deer season when deer populations are too high

**Increase Number of Licenses/Hunters**

- **63%**
  - Support increasing the number of licenses/hunters when deer populations are too high
Reduction Strategies

59%
Support including antlerless-only days in late Dec./early Jan. when deer populations are too high

Black Hills landowners were less likely than West River or East River landowners to support this

51%
Support including antlerless-only days immediately after firearm deer season when deer populations are too high
Reduction Strategies

42% of landowners are neutral to having split seasons when deer populations are too high & 37% are opposed

40% of landowners are neutral to the use of antlerless deer tags in October when deer populations are too high & 33% are opposed
Reduction Strategies

Increase Double and Triple Tag Licenses (3rd tag free)

42% of landowners support increasing double and triple tag licenses when deer populations are too high.

Black Hills landowners were less likely than West River or East River landowners to support this.
Landowners indicated written materials and word of mouth are the information sources they are the most likely to use followed by radio and/or TV programs.

56% of landowners said written materials was their most preferred (41% GFP and 15% other written material).
Deer Hunting

23

Average number of years South Dakota hunters have been hunting deer

39% have hunted 25 years or more

&

29% have hunted 10 years or less

78% most prefer to hunt white-tailed deer in SD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Season</th>
<th>Rank</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East River Deer</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; (1057)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West River Deer</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; (626)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archery Deer</td>
<td>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; (452)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Hills Deer</td>
<td>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; (287)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muzzleloader Deer</td>
<td>5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; (24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refuge Deer</td>
<td>6&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; (21)</td>
</tr>
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2015 Deer Applications

78,556
Unique deer license applicants in 2015

72,000
Applicants for the firearm deer seasons

7,983
of which were muzzleloader applicants

22,000
Applicants for the archery deer seasons

56,000
Hunters held at least 1 buck license

75%
Held only 1 buck license

19%
Held 2 buck licenses

5%
Held 3 buck licenses

1%
Held 4 or more buck licenses
Deer Hunter Motivations

- 91% enjoying the outdoors is important or very important
- 82% being with friends & family is important or very important
- 83% experiencing the challenge of the hunt is important or very important

![Graph showing mean importance of various motivations](image)
Deer Hunter Motivations

6% of hunters said all motivations were unimportant.

23% of hunters place higher importance on bringing meat home.

23% Of hunters place higher importance on harvesting a large-antlered buck.

48% of hunters said all motivations were important.

Female deer hunters tend to place higher importance on bringing meat home.

Male deer hunters tend to place higher importance on the sporting aspects of deer hunting.

Game, Fish & Parks

South Dakota
Where Hunted

52% of deer hunters had not hunted deer on Game Production Areas in the past 5 years.

37% of deer hunters rated the deer habitat on GPAS over past 5 years as good or very good.
54% of deer hunters had not hunted deer on Walk-In Areas in the past 5 years.

33% of deer hunters had no opinion about the deer habitat on WIAs over past 5 years.
Where Hunted – East River 2015

- **85%**
  - Hunted on private land
  - 74% of time spent on private land

- **30%**
  - Hunted on public land
  - 16% of time spent on public land

- **21%**
  - Hunted on Walk-In Areas
  - 7% of time spent on Walk-In Areas

- **8%**
  - Hunted on CREP
  - 2% of time spent on CREP
Where Hunted – West River 2015

66%

Hunted on private land - 54% of time spent on private land

45%

Hunted on public land - 30% of time spent on public land

34%

Hunted on Walk-In Areas Areas - 16% of time spent on Walk-In
Hunter Deer Survey
Reduction Strategies

53% of hunters support lengthening the regular firearm deer season when deer populations are too high & 27% are opposed

50% of hunters support increasing the number of licenses/hunters when deer populations are too high & 29% are opposed
Reduction Strategies

70% of hunters support antlerless-only days in late December/early January when deer populations are too high & 13% are opposed

61% of hunters support antlerless-only days immediately after firearm deer season when deer populations are too high & 16% are opposed
Reduction Strategies

Allow the use of antlerless deer tags in October during firearm antelope season

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent of Deer Hunters</th>
<th>Strongly Oppose</th>
<th>Oppose</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Strongly Support</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Strongly Oppose</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8</td>
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40% of hunters oppose using antlerless deer tags during firearm antelope season when deer populations are too high &

31% support this

Increase double and triple tag licenses (3rd tag free)

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<td>Strongly Oppose</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>15</td>
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50% of hunters support increasing double and triple tag licenses when deer populations are too high &

27% are opposed
Reduction Strategies

38%
Oppose split seasons when deer populations are too high

35% were neutral &
27% supported split seasons