



To: Honorable Members of the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Re: House Bill 1180 – Require legislative approval for the purchase of real property by the Department of Game, Fish, and Parks.
Position: Oppose
Date: February 13, 2024

Honorable Members of the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee,

On behalf of the Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation (CSF), I respectfully ask that you oppose House Bill 1180 (HB 1180), a bill that would require legislative approval for any property purchase made by the Department of Game, Fish, and Parks (GFP). Requiring GFP to have legislative approval for land purchases will ultimately hinder their ability to quickly and efficiently take advantage of opportunities to acquire property from willing sellers for the benefit of all South Dakotans.

Founded in 1989, CSF is the informed authority across outdoor issues and serves as the primary conduit for influencing public policy. Working with the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC), the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus (GSC), and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses (NASC), CSF gives a voice to hunters, anglers, recreational shooters, and trappers on Capitol Hill and throughout state capitols advocating on vital outdoor issues that are the backbone of our nation's conservation legacy.

In states like South Dakota, in which approximately 80% of land is privately owned, fish and wildlife agencies rely heavily on limited public lands to promote quality fish and wildlife conservation efforts while providing public access opportunities. For sportsmen and women, lack of access and increasing competition for limited public lands are widely cited as primary reasons that hunters and anglers no longer participate in these outdoor activities. By requiring GFP to seek legislative approval for all land, the agency is likely to miss out on quality opportunities to make offers and increase access for all South Dakotans. While concerns related to property rights are valid, it should be recognized that land acquisitions by the GFP are completed in coordination with willing sellers, many of whom cherish the idea of knowing that their lands are being purchased for the benefit of all South Dakotans. With this in mind, we maintain that the intent behind HB 1180 will unnecessarily inhibit the agency’s ability to provide additional public access opportunities.

CSF respectfully asks the members of the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee to oppose HB 1180, which creates an unnecessary step for GFP as they seek to acquire lands for public access. Given the importance of outdoor recreation to South Dakota’s economy, opportunities to increase public access should be celebrated, rather than vilified. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on these issues. Should you require additional information on this, or other sportsmen-related topics, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,

Jake Gould
Coordinator, Great Plains States
Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation
jgould@congressionalsportsmen.org | 202-594-7973

Your Inside Connection to Outdoor Legislation