

South Dakota Walleye Classic

Meeting Minutes

January 16, 2026

The meeting was called to order by Gregg Yonkovich via Teams Meeting. The following members attended: Becky Randall, Bill Waeckerle, Dana Randall, Marissa Gilyard, Chad Schilling, Craig Mehlhaff, Mike Valster and Bill Shepke.

A copy of the December minutes was handed out to those in attendance. Craig Mehlhaff made a motion to approve and second by Bill Waeckerle. Motion carried.

There was no financial report.

New Business

1. 2026 Tournament updates & follow up items:
 - a. We are awaiting approval from GF&P. Mike V. will get them copy of AFTCO insurance for GF&P and for our insurance agency also.
 - b. Tournament Prizes: Mike said that the 1st place prize the Ford Maverick has been wrapped and ready for display. The pickup is in escrow now so it will be ready to hand over to the 1st place winner at the awards ceremony on Sunday. Jerry Beadle is driving the Maverick to Mobridge fishing tournament and will have it on display for 3 other tournaments. Jerry is donating all the travel time and gas. Thank you, Jerry!! The other prizes will be Bi-hourly, Pontoon prize (working on donations) closest to 3 lb award, female award, kids award, etc.
 - c. Other tournament activities: Dakota-Mart from Pierre will be present on Friday or Chad & Shonda's convenience store will have AFTCO clothing sales if they are up and running. We will do 50/50 split pot, gun raffles and Calcutta (random drawing of names again) also the day of registration. Community Hall bar will have bar open. Becky gave Cody Ritter the times for Friday 2pm till done after Calcutta and then Sunday bar will open at 4pm till done.
 - d. Publish Tournament activities~ Mike is getting all details worked out to update AFTCO website and then Marissa will update the SDWC website. Advertising will start in February, and an email will go out to past

participants when registration is open. Midwest Tournaments will handle all the registrations this year as their software can handle it all. Mike is also having posters made again for us to distribute around. Info will include:

- i. Friday Registration will start at 2pm-6pm, rules meeting at 7pm and then Calcutta after that. Food Trucks will be available on Friday~ Shag-in-Pit from Mellette (BBQ), Shari's Jo & Go (coffee & slushies), and possibly The Frosty Flamingo (ice cream truck).
 - ii. Saturday activity- weigh-in locations on website. Bernie Bisbee will take photos for the weekend.
 - iii. Sunday activity- weigh-in locations and Awards Ceremony starting at 5pm at Akaska Community Hall. Bill Waekerle is going to contact Senator Mike Rounds to see if he could be present to award the 1st place winner as he was in integral part when the SDWC Tournament started.
- e. Mike and Gregg will complete the rules by end of the month so they can be placed on website.
 - f. Fish donations: Gregg will add the Gettysburg Men's Club to our permit for fish cleaning at Whitlock's.
 - g. Insurance- Bryan is working with Marin Biel for our insurance and Mike will get the AFTCO insurance to Bryan also.
 - h. Advertising will start in Feb. per Mike and Marissa will piggyback off the AFTCO site to update the SDWC website on the 2026 tournament. Registrants will also be able to register for the tournament on the SDWC website, Marissa will also get that accomplished.
 - i. There will be no limit on entries this year. AFTCO will have 600 swag packs shipped and hopefully we will be able to have them dropped here in Akaska at Becky and Dana's garage. Bill W. said we can get a forklift lined up.
 - j. Fish tags- we will give each entrant 4 tags per day. There is no color preference. Gregg will check the supply of tags and then will let Bill W. know how many to order. We will need about 4000 tags.
 - k. Gregg, Bryan and Ryan Persoon will decide on weigh in locations. Midwest will have the same set up at Whitlock's as Swan Creek. There won't be a camera person at Whitlock's. Big Al may not be present, but Mike V. will have someone announcer for weigh-ins.

- l. Marissa is working on the 2027 calendars and trying to get the old pictures from Vicky Suby but has had no success yet. Gregg will get Marissa the gun list. We will sell the 2027 calendars at the tournament.
- m. We will have a meal for all the workers on Friday night catered by the Shag-in-Pit, SDWC will pay for it. We will decide on a menu for Saturday night also.
- n. Kids Fishing Tournament is Jan. 31st-Becky has food ordered, Craig M. will get gift cards for adult give aways. Bernie will take photos that day.

Old Business:

- a. Calendar sales- 15 unsold calendars
- b. Weekley gun calendar continues.
- c. Marissa hadn't received any historical photos yet from Vicky Suby but was working on it.
- d. Marissa will remove the video on SDWC page about the Buckley award
- e. LOWC update from Bill W. – meeting was January 14th. Bill reported that the numbers were up for fish growth rate from 3 years ago. The need for 14-16 million fingerlings must be available yearly; gizzard shad has helped. We don't have our own brood stock yet but that is coming along. There is 714 million dollars that come in for walleye yearly. Mike V. pledged 10% of the AFTCO registrations from this year's tournament to the Lake Oahe Restoration Coalition. Mike reported that at the end of 2025 AFTCO gave 9 million to conservation projects.

New Business from the floor:

Marissa is working on updating logos on for the SDWC website and will help collect sponsorships as Craig M. would like to pass that on. We did have 2 sponsors that dropped out this year. Marissa will get the AFTCO logo for sponsorship so we can get that on the website.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Craig Mehlhaff and second by Bill Waeckerle. Motion carried.

Next meeting- **Monday, February 23rd @ 7pm.**

Meeting adjourned.

Submitted by: Becky Randall, Secretary

