



South Dakota Campground Owners Association (SDCOA)

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1/10/2022 TALKING POINTS FOR SDCOA MEMBERS

PROPOSED EXPANSION OF CAMPSITES AT CUSTER STATE PARK

SDCOA stands opposed to the expansion of campsites at Custer State Park. We have submitted our perspective to the state, and now it's time for you, the South Dakota business owners, to share your views with your elected officials. We encourage you to express your own concerns on the matter, yet we're outlining some talking points (things you might want to say to your elected officials) to help start your conversation.

Other documents relating to this are available on our .org website:

<https://southdakotacampgroundownersassociation.org/2021/12/13/2022-legislative-session>.

If you have any questions about the bill, how to find your elected officials, what to say to them, or SDCOA's position, please contact Mary (contact info is in the letterhead).

BILL

- Proposed bill to allow for the expansion of campsites at Custer State Park
- (Dates and legislative committees have yet to be assigned)

FIND YOUR LEGISLATORS

Find your legislators: <https://sdlegislature.gov/Legislators/Find> (then type in your address)

All legislators: <https://sdlegislature.gov/legislators/listing/44>

TALKING POINTS

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The State of South Dakota should not be in the business of bankrupting small businesses. Adding an additional 175 campsites at CSP is more than double the average size of some Custer area campgrounds in the private sector and is considerably greater than the average size of any South Dakota privately owned campground (based on SDCOA membership data). Add to that, CSP's fee structure makes it impossible for the private sector to compete. During the shoulder season or when the surge in camping diminishes, CSP will fill it's 175 sites, and nearby Custer parks could be empty.

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The project will change the environment of the state park. Adding improvements will take away from the natural state park environment. They will have to modify the road to accommodate the larger RVs and increased traffic, which is already an issue. This will take away from the wildlife feel of the park.

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If the State wants to help the camping crunch, they can reduce or eliminate the permit and regulatory process through which the State puts the business owners. If the legislators allow this proposed project to move forward, South Dakota will be sending a message that the private sector isn't needed for outdoor hospitality.

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The state should not be adding campsites at double what it costs the private sector to do the same work.

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GF&P says CSP has not had campsite expansion in 40 years, and the private sector has definitely grown in those years. Private parks have already been using their own money, without help from the state or federal government, to build more sites. One owner in Custer tells SDCOA that at least eight parks in Custer are doing upgrades.

The private sector has been meeting the demand of campsites. These additional public campsites would actually have a negative impact on the private sector when the current pandemic-driven surge of demand subsides. This GF&P project would pull the rug from under the private sector parks in the Custer area that are expanding to meet the demand.

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CSP should limit the length of stay and increase your rates. This is a common business practice when demand is greater than supply, you aren't charging enough.

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How does it make sense to use General Fund dollars (coming from tax collections such as those collected at private parks) to compete with and possibly undermine those very businesses? My businesses tax dollars weren't collected so the state could use it damage my business and my livelihood. My business provides for not only the business and its employees, but it also provides for the business owner's family, their education, medical care, groceries, and lives.

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We South Dakotans love our Crown Jewel the way it is. Please don't add more public accommodations and the infrastructure to support it. Remember how many of those CSP accommodates actually come from out-of-state. The General Fund should be supporting the state's residents.

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That the Governor put this in her budget is contradictory to the hard line she's so publicly drawn between free enterprise and socialism. She has also repeatedly stated the government needs "to get out of the way" of small businesses (e.g., [video from September 30, 2021](#)). Make no mistake, the guests to be accommodated in these new sites would otherwise stay in a private park, paying sales taxes and supporting the real estate tax of the entrepreneur.

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While there are rational reasons why this expansion would be beneficial to the state, and even to camping guests, it *strongly* conflicts with an open atmosphere in South Dakota for the growth of private enterprise without the cloud of interference from the State.

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In the area of the proposed development, the public can already see a sign for buried fiber optic cable, and cell phone service is strong. GF&P tells us the sites will have only electricity, and the area doesn't and won't have wi fi. Who and what are we to believe?

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