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**EDITORS/NEWS DIRECTORS:** Please consider the following column from Gov. Dennis Daugaard. For an **audio recording** of the Governor's weekly column, visit [news.sd.gov/media.aspx](http://news.sd.gov/media.aspx) and click on "Audio" under "Governor Dennis Daugaard."

### **Expanding Outdoor Opportunities In Spearfish Canyon**

**A column by Gov. Dennis Daugaard:**

Today I'd like to share with you something I'm passionate about in the Black Hills. Over the last few months, the Spearfish Canyon Foundation has been working with the state Game, Fish, and Parks Department to acquire a beautiful property from Homestake Mining Company. Within just a few weeks the Foundation will donate funds to Game, Fish and Parks for the purchase of 73 acres in Spearfish Canyon, including Spearfish Falls. That land, along with two other adjacent state-owned parcels including Roughlock Falls, is the genesis of this an opportunity for our state.

My hope is to establish Spearfish Canyon State Park in the northern Black Hills. The proposed state park would contain iconic natural features in the canyon including Roughlock Falls, Spearfish Falls, Spearfish Creek, Little Spearfish Creek, and fishing ponds. Game, Fish and Parks would improve existing camping, hiking, fishing, and sightseeing opportunities and upgrade facilities and roads.

Spearfish Falls and the hiking trail that leads to it is currently owned by Homestake and closed to the public. One of the benefits of creating a sState pPark in Spearfish Canyon is the opportunity to reopen the trail and make improvements at Spearfish Falls similar to those that have been made at Roughlock Falls. I think it is imperative that the public has the opportunity to enjoy the unspoiled beauty found in Spearfish Canyon. I believe a modest user fees to maintain these facilities in Little Spearfish Canyon is an appropriate way to cover the expenses of maintaining the facilities to insure that they are available for future generations. At the same time, my plan does not include a park entrance fee of any type to drive the scenic byway through Spearfish Canyon.

Spearfish Canyon is a special place. Our family has visited many times. Whether on a snowmobile ride in the winter, a hiking trip in the summer, or a day enjoying the beautiful colors of the fall foliage, many people from across the state and nation have fond memories of Spearfish Canyon. The famous architect Frank Lloyd Wright, said this after his visit in 1935:

“But how is it that I've heard so little of this miracle and we, toward the Atlantic, have heard so much of the Grand Canyon when this is even more miraculous. My hat is off to South Dakota Treasures.”

I am very excited about making Spearfish Canyon more accessible as our newest state park; but we have many steps to go before this vision becomes a reality. Senator Thune is leading an effort by our congressional delegation to authorize a federal-state land exchange. This isn't a certainty, but we're working on it, and I'm hopeful. The state has been instrumental in the past in improving Spearfish Canyon in the past and I believe this plan will carry on that tradition to preserve and improve this jewel for future generations.