



Policy Update

July 31, 2026

Larry Rhoden Wins 2026 South Dakota Gubernatorial Republican Primary

South Dakota's primary election runoff concluded Tuesday night with Larry Rhoden winning by a 40-point margin over Toby Doeden. The election is the first time South Dakota has had a runoff election that allowed all Republican voters to participate. While runoffs have occurred in the past, a previous law required the runoff to occur at the South Dakota Republican Convention. In the 1980s, the Legislature changed the law to allow all South Dakota registered voters to vote instead of a few hundred delegates selecting the party's nominee.

With the Republican nominee selected, the general election ballot choices are now set. Larry Rhoden will face Dan Ahlers, a Democrat from Dell Rapids, in the general election on Tuesday, November 3, 2026.

Click [here](#) to learn more about the runoff election.

Sign Up for Prairie Dog Control Programs

The South Dakota Departments of Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) and Agriculture and Natural Resources (DANR) want to remind South Dakota landowners to [register for assistance](#) with prairie dog encroachment. The deadline for enrollment is **August 15**.

GFP will control prairie dogs that have encroached onto private land from adjacent public land, with a few exclusions. Landowners who have encroachment problems on their property from adjacent public land must be within one mile of the public land and have at least ten acres of actual prairie dog colonies to be eligible for assistance. Eligibility will be verified for every control request through GPS mapping, whether it is a new or recurring request. Landowners must register at prairiedogcontrol.sd.gov before August 15 to request assistance with unwanted prairie dogs.

EPA Approves South Dakota's 2026 Surface Water Quality Report

The South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (DANR) announced that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has formally approved the 2026 South Dakota Surface Water Quality Assessment Report, marking an important milestone in the state's ongoing work to monitor, assess, and protect South Dakota's rivers, lakes, and streams.

The 2026 Surface Water Quality Assessment Report is presented through a newly redesigned interactive [Story Map](#), offering the public easier access to surface water data, pollutant information, monitoring programs, and individual waterbody assessments. The Story Map format improves transparency, makes complex water quality information more understandable, and provides direct links to data used in statewide water management decisions.

The 2026 assessment highlights encouraging surface water quality improvements across the state, including reductions in impairments and continued restoration of waterbodies:

- 38 waterbodies were removed from the impaired waters list after meeting all applicable water quality criteria — including 14 streams and 24 lakes now recognized as fully supporting their designated beneficial uses.
- Several waters showed improved conditions due to successful watershed restoration efforts, targeted monitoring, and partnership-driven projects aimed at reducing sediment, nutrient pollution, and bacteria.
- The Story Map's updated format makes these improvements more visible, allowing residents, communities, and decision-makers to see where investments and local conservation actions are making measurable differences.

Click [here](#) to view the Story Map.

Contact for Questions

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