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Bureau Makes Revisions To Hilger's Gulch Plan Based On Public Input

PIERRE, S.D. – Based on input from the public, the South Dakota Bureau of Administration is revising its plan for Hilger's Gulch.

“After reading every letter and considering every suggestion, the Governor asked for some changes to the Hilger's Gulch plan,” said Jeff Holden, interim Commissioner of the Bureau of Administration. “Through this revised plan, I am confident Hilger's Gulch will continue to be a beautiful destination for locals and visitors.”

The Bureau of Administration will retain Kentucky Bluegrass in the most visible and highly-used areas of the Gulch, including Governor's Grove and the “sled hill” area along Church Street. These areas will not be changed and will continue to be a mowed and watered bluegrass area.

BOA is also retaining all paved walking paths. Throughout the Gulch, two swaths will be mowed on either side of the paved walking paths, where the terrain allows mowing. In addition to the existing walking paths, the Bureau will add new gravel hiking trails to allow walkers easy access to other parts of the Gulch.

Lower-lying areas of bluegrass, which are too wet to be usable much of the year due to drainage and watering, will be replaced with warm season grasses, bushes, trees and wildflowers. Trees will include wild plum, apricot, sumac and willow; bushes will include sand cherry, choke cherry, buffalo berry and prairie rose; and wild flowers include purple coneflowers, yarrow, blanketflowers, phlox, blue aster and others.

The revised plan includes the addition of concrete benches, Martin houses, dog-waste disposable bags and receptacles, and more wildflower patches. BOA has also modified the tree-planting plans to attract more songbirds and include shorter shrubs, such as gooseberry, currant and riverbank grape, so that the Capitol view from Fourth Street is unobstructed.

Between 2005 and 2014, state government annually spent an average of \$36,000 to irrigate Hilger's Gulch. In 2012, the cost to irrigate was nearly \$50,000. In addition,

costs for mowing, fertilizing and weed treatment in Hilger's Gulch exceeded \$27,000 in FY2015. The new vegetation is expected to save the state money over time because it will require less maintenance and will not necessitate the use of chemical herbicides.

Groundwork for the new landscape in Hilger's Gulch will begin this fall. The project is expected to be completed by the spring of 2017.

To see a map of the project, go to news.sd.gov/mediacontent.aspx?id=8&media=photo.

-- 30 --

*A map of the project, cost estimate document, and image of some of the plants are attached.