

Competitive Analysis Report

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Website or SD-GFP

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ITC 298 UX Research Methods

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Objectives for Analysis

The overall objective of this competitive analysis is to develop a standard for how the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (SD GFP) website should perform once we complete the redesign. Our team will analyze two websites of a similar subject matter, and use this information to compare and contrast to the SD GFP site. Both of these websites could be competitors to SD GFP, as they appeal to the same audience.

The two competitors we chose for our analysis are Nebraska Fish & Parks and Mississippi Wildlife, Fisheries & Parks. The Nebraska Fish & Parks website is a site that seems to reflect the elements we would like to see on the SD GFP site. Conversely, the Mississippi Wildlife, Fisheries & Parks site homepage displays some design elements that we would want to avoid.

Our specific objectives include using assessment criteria to identify positive as well as negative attributes of both sites. We want to find out what may be frustrating to a user, causing them to either abandon the site or feel the need to contact via phone because they couldn't complete the task they wished, or easily find the information they need. We will analyze navigation, visuals, features, functionality, and responsiveness to discover what is working for the user and what is not.

Assessment Criteria

1. Labels & Navigation - The manner in which information is organized on the site and the effectiveness of menus and links.
2. Visuals - The manner in which graphics and text are displayed and organized on the page. Quality of images as well as graphics, and color choices.
3. Features & Functionality - The quality of site features and crucial aspects of the site such as calendars, calls to action and general interactive tools.
4. Responsiveness - The usability of the website on different devices, such as mobile phones and tablets as well as different browsers and platforms (i.e. Mac or PC).
5. Location Awareness - Consistency of subpages, sidebars and branding.

Findings

Nebraska Fish & Parks

<http://outdoornebraska.gov/>

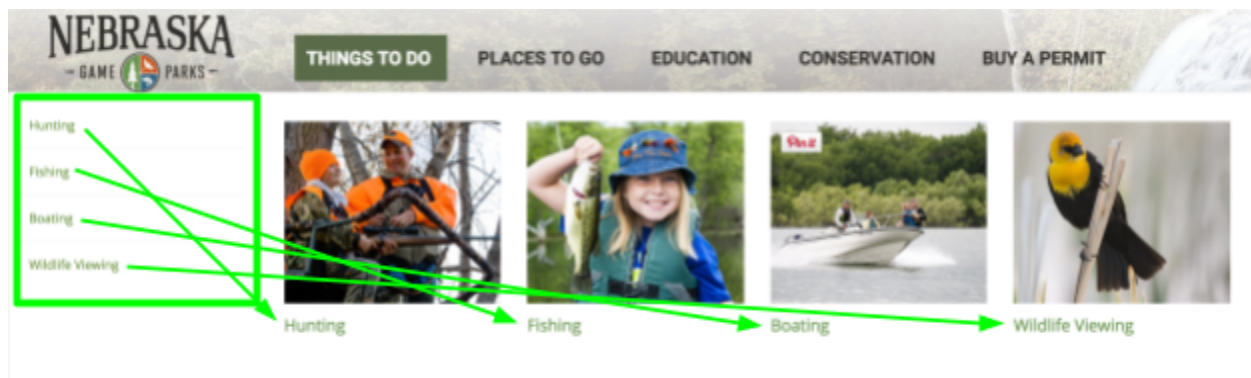
1. Labels & Navigation

Pros:

- Simple main navigation - plain language is used, and there is no field specific language used that may confuse a user who may not be familiar with certain jargon.
- Self explanatory section titles, such as “Places to Go” and “Things to Do.”
- Sidebar links on inner pages are helpful and pertain to the subject matter of corresponding page.

Cons:

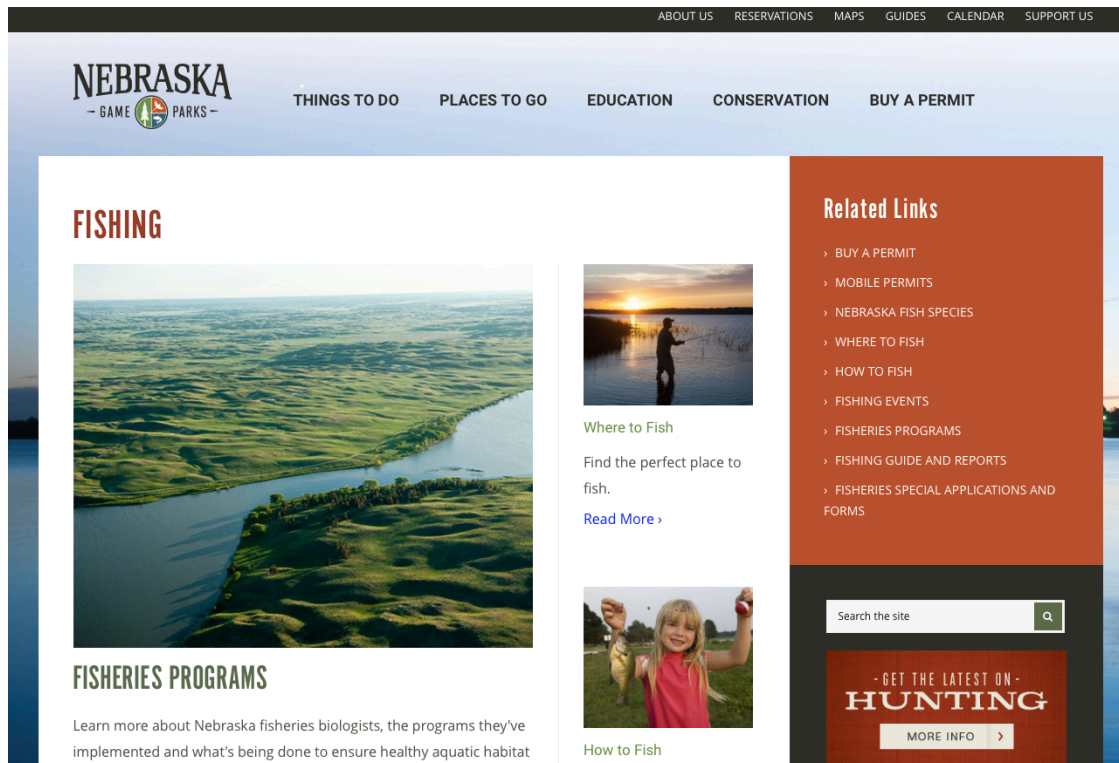
- Somewhat repetitive. Vertical links list under left side of “Things to Do” & “Places to Go” repeat horizontal tiles.



2. Visuals

Pros:

- Branding is consistent and appropriate throughout the site.
- Font and color choices are thoughtful for a site that wants to promote awareness of the beauty of nature.



- Great photos, high quality and appropriate to subject matter.
- Graphic heavy with beautiful menu animations, and dynamic content.
- Graphics used on maps page to aid understanding and accessibility.

Public boating areas

Waters open to public boating

[View map >](#)



Lake contour maps

Underwater landscape of lakes

[View map >](#)



Big game check stations

Check station locations across the state

[View map >](#)



Cons:

- Animations and dynamic content may be slow for users with older devices.
- Graphics as well as photos are high resolution, which may take additional time to load on older devices or in older browsers.

3. Features & Functionality

Pros:

- Quick links in sidebar for specific needs.
- Sidebar offers quick search, relevant links, and consistent categories pages for articles.
- Calls to Action draw attention to “Buy a Permit” while “National Parks” section allows quick access to individual park information.
- Calendar and spotlights with upcoming events are on the same page rather having them in two different places on the site.
- “Make a Reservation” and “Buy a Permit” takes user to external sites, but the branding is still consistent.
- Search bar located prominently on home page.



- Maps page has interactive GIS maps, downloadable PDFs, and mobile app maps.

Interactive GIS maps

The following geographic information systems (GIS) maps provide an interactive and in-depth look beyond our standard PDF maps. Check back frequently as additional maps are developed by our GIS team.

<p>Public hunting areas Land open to public hunting View map ></p>		<p>Public Access Atlas An interactive version of our Public Access Atlas View map > Additional Atlas data ></p>	
<p>Public boating areas Waters open to public boating View map ></p>		<p>Public fishing areas Waters open to public fishing View map ></p>	
<p>Lake contour maps Underwater landscape of lakes View map ></p>		<p>Family fishing events Event locations across the state View map ></p>	
<p>Big game check stations Check station locations across the state View map ></p>		<p>Nebraska state parks and recreation areas Park locations across the state View map ></p>	

Cons:

- Calendar feature is difficult to read.
 - No apparent color key
 - Event titles are too long for container

- “Tags” doesn't work at all - no matter what tag you select (canoeing, pistol match, etc.) no events populate the calendar.

Categories ▾		Tags ▾									
« 2015		< MAR		APRIL 2016		MAY >		2017 »		Month ▾	
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat					
					1	2					
					“The Queen of Bing Basic Archery Instru Cranes and History ! Explore Archery 6:00	“The Queen of Bing Cranes and History ! Platte River Art Sho Outdoor Archery Ra Learn to Hunt – Spr Archery Fun Shoot 1 Critter Corner 12:00					
3	4	5	6	7	8	9					
“The Queen of Bing Cranes and History Platte River Art Sho Boating Safety Cour	Cranes and History Junior Olympic Arch Learn to Hunt – Spr Centerfire Challenge Junior Olympic Arch	Cranes and History Outdoor Skills Club Best Shots Rifle Ma First Steps Pistol 6:0 Water Aerobics 6:00 Growing Up WILD V Junior Olympic Arch Ladies Day at the R Women’s Firearm Se	Intro to Gun Safety & Boating Safety Cour	Cranes and History Explore Archery 6:00 Learn to Hunt – Spr .22 Pistol League ag	“The Queen of Bing Cranes and History ! Explore Archery 6:00	“The Queen of Bing Angry Cow Trail Run Archery Range Clos Cranes and History !					
10	11	12	13	14	15	16					
“The Queen of Bing Cranes and History	Junior Olympic Arch Growing Up WILD V Centerfire Challenge Junior Olympic Arch	Project WILD/Aquat Outdoor Skills Club Junior Olympic Arch Best Shots Rifle Ma Family Fishing – Nor Junior Olympic Arch	Intro to Gun Safety & Boating Safety Cour	Coalition of Historic Explore Archery 6:00 Learn to – Mushroom .22 Pistol League ag	Coalition of Historic Explore Archery 6:00	Coalition of Historic Spring Muster Boating Safety Cour Family Fishing – Tre Hooked for Life 10:0					

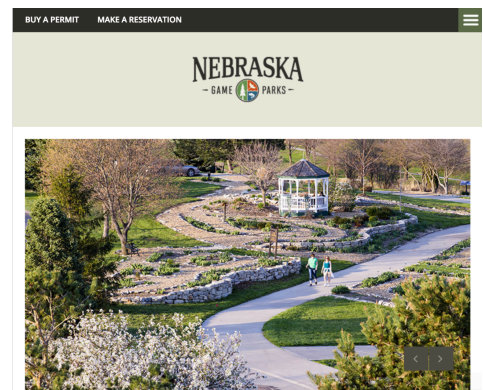
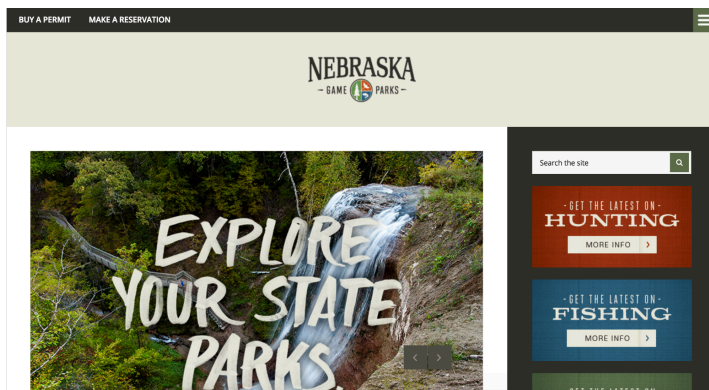
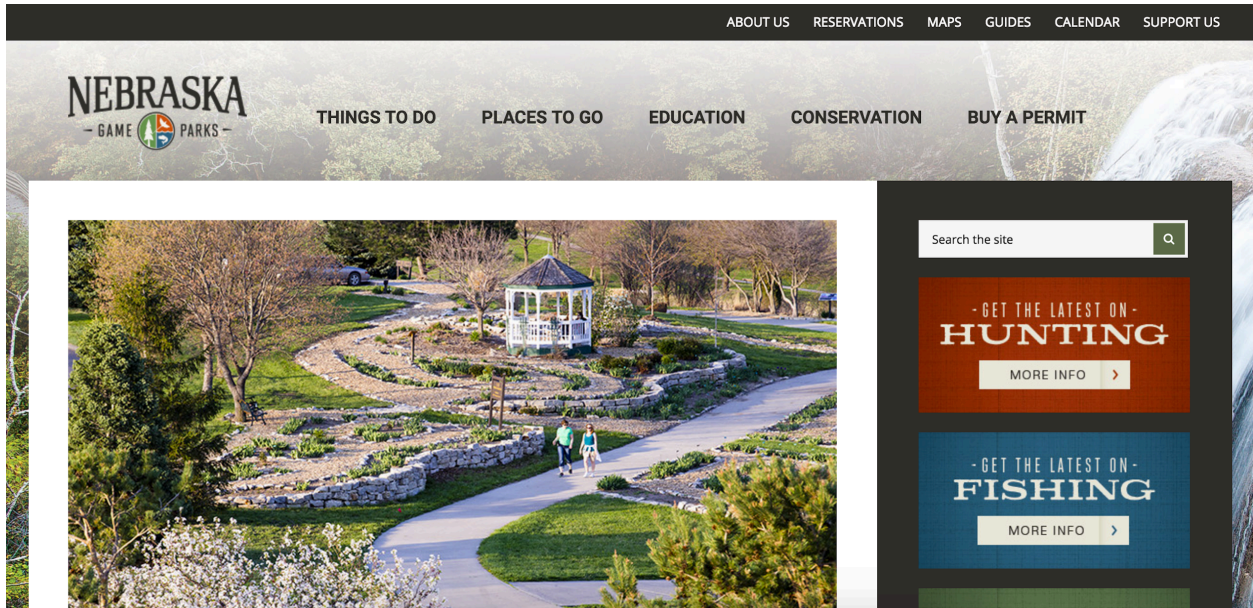
4. Responsiveness

Pros:

- Responsive for tablet, mobile.

Cons:

- Breaking points: 1200px, 770px, 570px

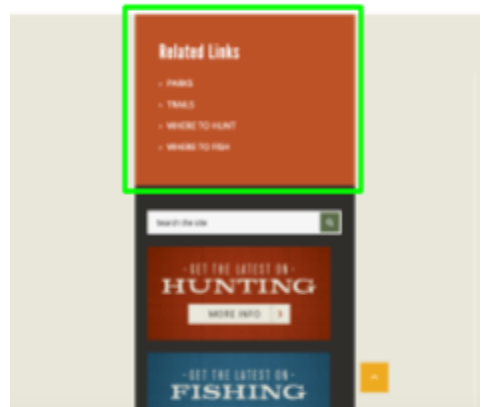
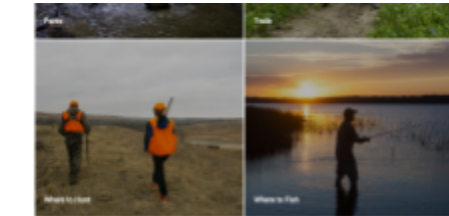
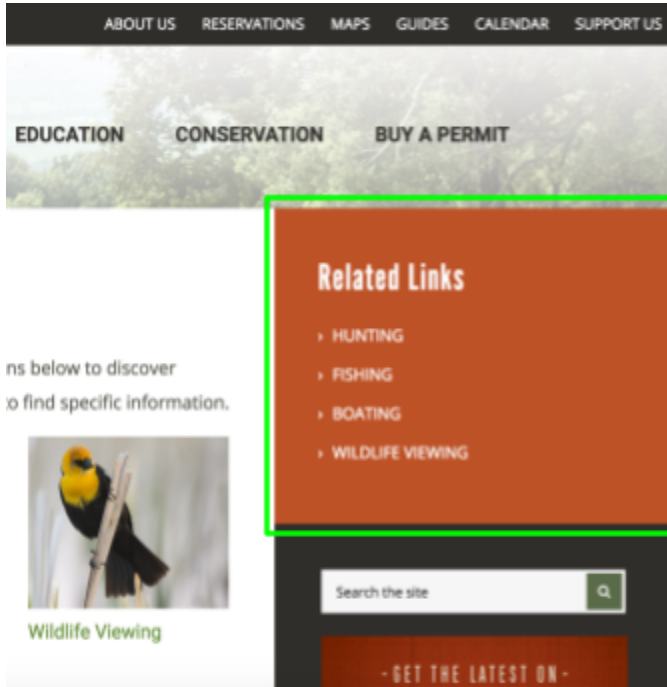


5. Location Awareness

- Main nav is consistently placed at top center of page above 1200px
 - Mobile nav used at 1200px and below, top right corner
- Good use of utilities at 1200px and below, top left corner.
- Landing pages are consistent in design.
- Sidebar is consistently on right, always contains quick links, search and Related Content links for the current page.
 - At 770px, sidebar drops below main content

Cons:

- When viewing site on mobile, search bar is below main content - too far down the page for easy use



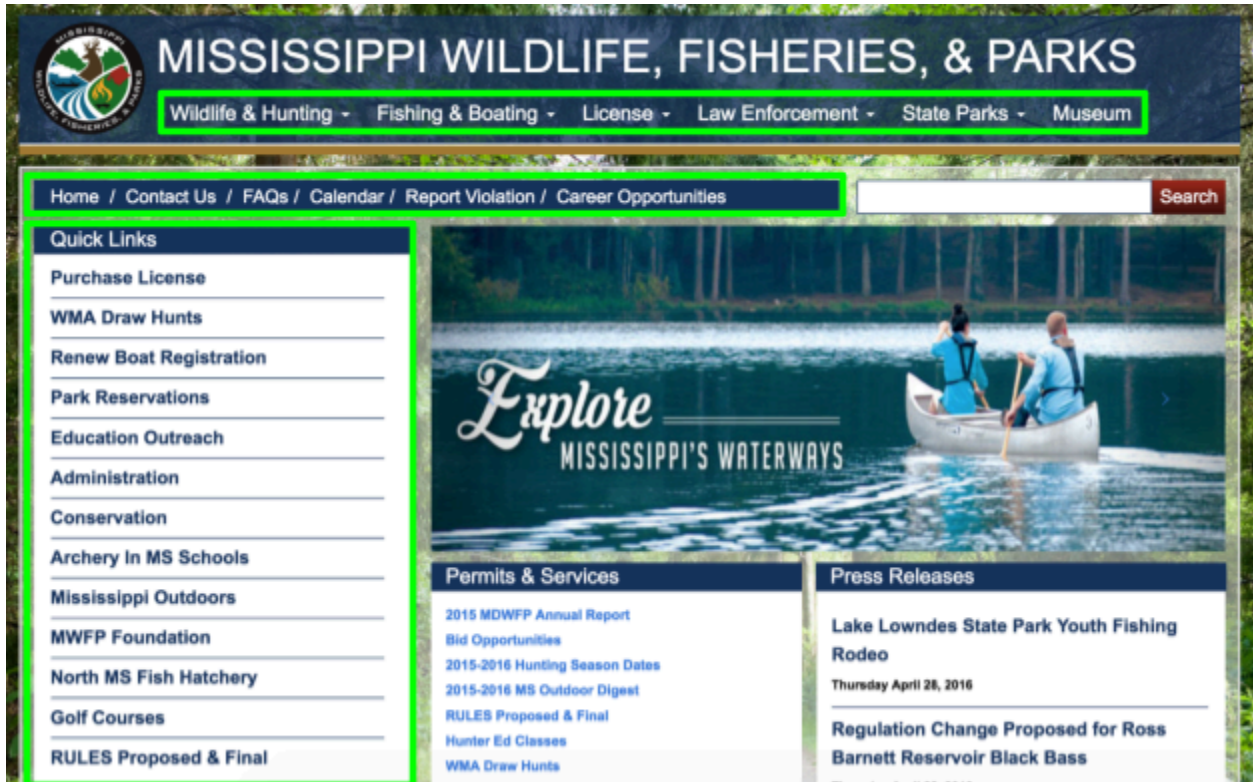
Mississippi Wildlife, Fisheries, & Parks

<https://www.mdwfp.com/>

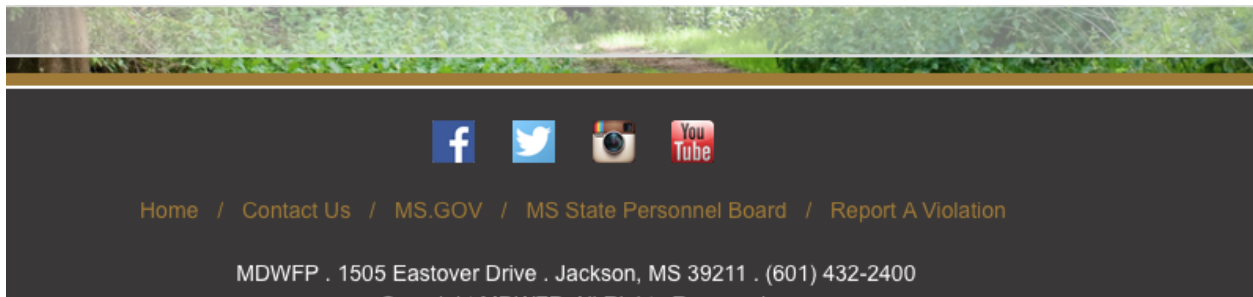
1. Labels & Navigation

Cons:

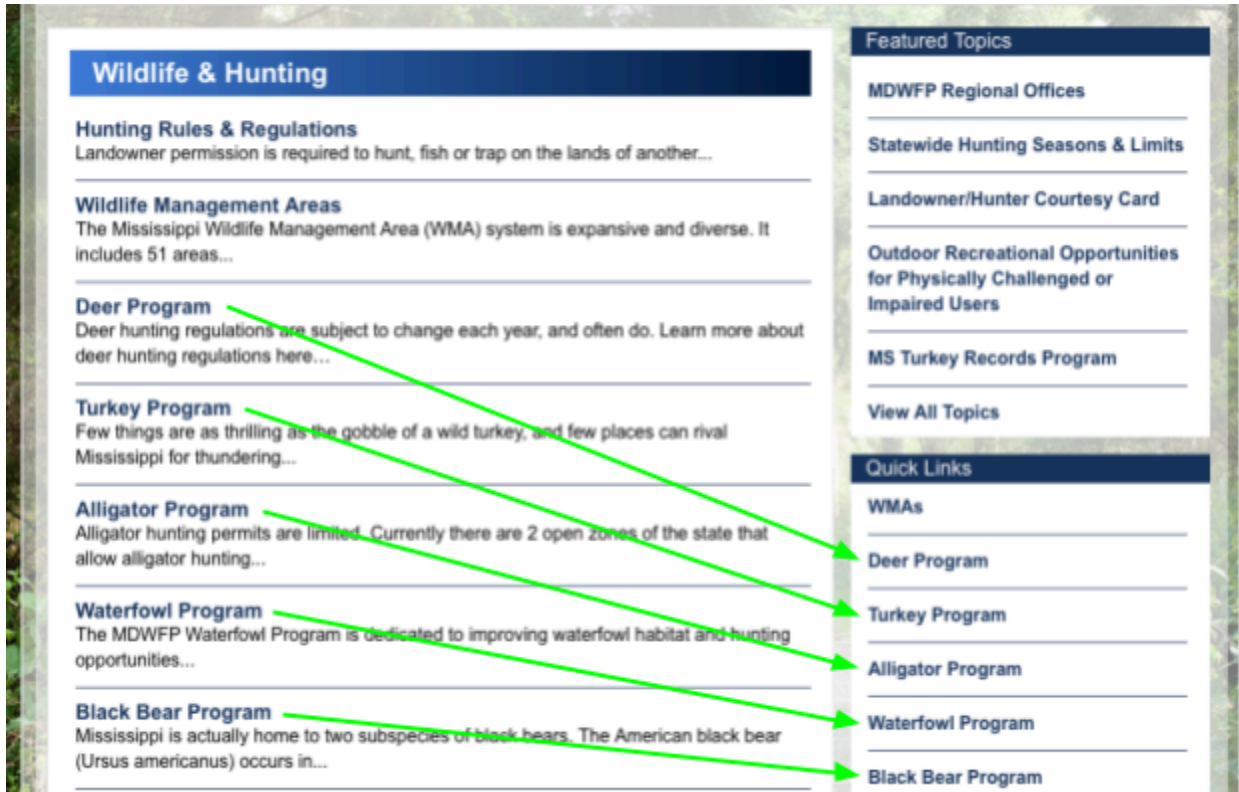
- Navigation is not concise and is cluttered.
 - Too many links on homepage, not categorized. Too hectic.
 - While categories like “License” exists, everything seems geared to the shareholders, rather than the user. More of a top down design, versus a bottom up design.
 - Top two navs compete with one another, and relevance of nav links are questionable.
 - Main navigation contains submenus that are not user friendly.
- Quick links are too long, defeating the purpose of a quick link.



- Some homepage links look like they belong in the footer or in an 'about us' link on the main nav. (i.e. administration, press releases, etc)



- Quick links on inner pages are redundant - right sidebar links repeat same information in main body.



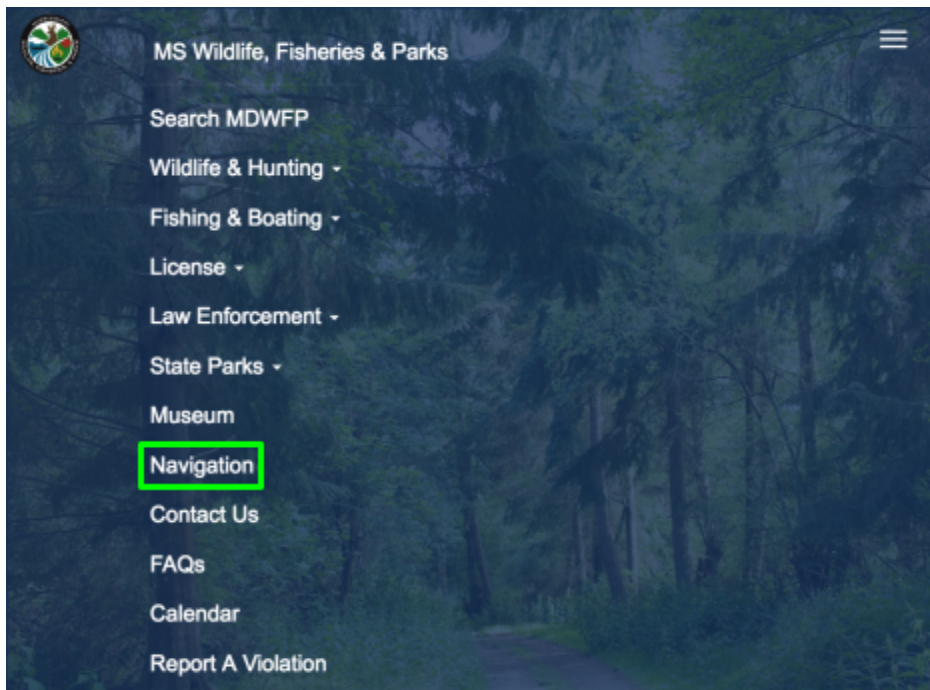
- Poor information architecture - looks like many items should go under an "Education" section (which doesn't exist).



- Main navigation links don't have hover feature, must be clicked on to show sub-nav items.
- Clicking on main nav items don't lead to gateway page - user must click on "All Programs" to access gateway page.



- Mobile navigation menu is hectic.
 - Search is placed in nav as a link rather than search field
 - "Navigation" isn't actually a link, although it appears as such
 - "Career Opportunities" disappears



2. Visuals

Cons:

- The home page is hectic - there's too much going on. Too many random paragraphs/sentences that don't make sense.
- Background image is distracting, and gives the page a busy feeling.
- Not enough white space, making the site feel cluttered
- Very few graphics or images on inner pages
- No central focus to the page, no call to action
- Branding seems non-existent - State parks and Museum links lead to pages with elements/graphics that do not appear anywhere on main site



3. Features & Functionality

Cons:

- The "Quick Links" are nonsensical, these are not necessarily links that a user would need to find quickly

Quick Links

[Purchase License](#)

[WMA Draw Hunts](#)

[Renew Boat Registration](#)

[Park Reservations](#)

[Education Outreach](#)

[Administration](#)

[Conservation](#)

[Archery In MS Schools](#)

[Mississippi Outdoors](#)

[MWFP Foundation](#)

[North MS Fish Hatchery](#)

[Golf Courses](#)

[RULES Proposed & Final](#)

- Extra home link is redundant



- Calendar is shown as a list of events
 - No way to sort
 - No way to see by month
 - Font size used for date is too small

Upcoming Events

Man Eating Bengal Tigers Lecture

Tuesday May 03, 2016

Lake Lowndes State Park - Catfish

Thursday May 05, 2016

Lake Lowndes State Park - Pond Mgmt

Thursday May 05, 2016

Birdsong and Bluegrass

Saturday May 07, 2016

2016 Youth Art Contest Deadline

4. Responsiveness

Pros:

- Responsive for tablet, mobile
- Breaking points: 1200px, 990px, 770px

Cons:

- Although breakpoints for tablet and mobile are incorporated, there is a redundancy of keylines which overwhelm the entire screen and negatively affect the visual quality of the site.



5. Location Awareness

Pros:

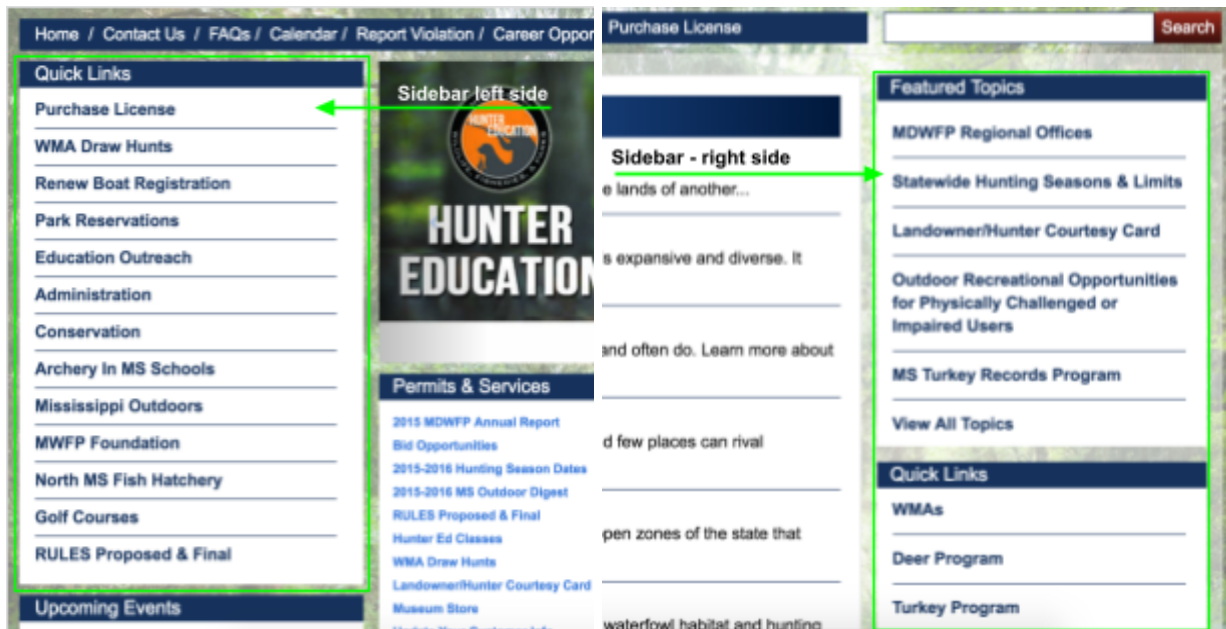
- Main nav is consistently placed at top center of page above 770px
 - Mobile nav used at 770px and below, top right corner

Cons:

- Side nav (Featured Topics and Quick Links sections) are on Left side on home page, Right side on inner pages

Home

Inner



- Search bar remains at top of page whether on desktop or mobile, but on home page only

Design Recommendations

Based on our analysis of the selected competitors' websites, we have developed the following recommendations to optimize the South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks website.

Labels and Navigation

We recommend that the site utilize simple, clean navigation with self-explanatory labels. Similarly, any side navigations should be succinct and directed towards the target user population. Navigation items that are obscurely labeled will make it difficult for the user to find what they need. Long labels that are confusing should be avoided, as well as overuse of unnecessary text decoration - such as underlining on navigation items.

We suggest utilizing space in the footer for any links that are not essential to the target user population, to avoid cluttering the main content and navigation bar.

Visuals

Visually, the branding of the site should be consistent throughout the entire site. Font and color choices must be carefully chosen and appropriate to the subject of the site as a whole. Additionally, pages should be designed to facilitate logical eye movement through the page.

Use of spotlight images can have a positive effect on user experience and provide a focal point for the user, and are especially suitable for home and landing pages - utilizing that space is vital. We support using white space in order to prevent pages from

looking cluttered, and believe that any background image used should not be distracting to the user. We also suggest the thoughtful use of other graphics and images throughout the destination pages to support the site's content and pique the user's interest.

We suggest the use of high-quality photos, graphics and animations that can significantly enhance the user experience. However, it is crucial that photos be optimized for web use, and animations are limited as to avoid slow load times.

Features and Functionality

To improve usability, features such as sidebar navigation or "quick links" must be vetted to ensure relevance to both the target user and the page content. These links should be labeled clearly, else they may be confusing to users. We recommend avoiding long "quick links" sections, as this should be reserved for the most essential functions only. Features such as high-resolution maps and downloadable guides are great resources for users, and enhance their experience with the site. Additional features, such as events calendars, are also highly recommended, but must be carefully designed to fit the specific content. Features that are difficult to use may be looked over or abandoned.

Responsiveness

We want to ensure the SD GFP site can be viewed across a wide range of devices and platforms with break-points for tablets and mobile phones. In keeping with our recommendation for a clean site design that utilizes white space, we recommend engaging, optimized graphics.

The optimized graphics should avoid the risk of the site running slow or getting bogged down on older equipment or browsers.

Location Awareness

Whenever possible, we recommend using consistent locations for elements on landing pages especially sidebars. Specifically, the main navigation - it will always be placed at top center of every page. As well, the location of the sidebar or any related “quick links” section will remain the same throughout and wording should always pertain to the current page’s content. Since users of this site may rely heavily on the search bar, we want to make sure it remains above the center and in the same location on every page.

In general, we want to employ best practices with regards to the location of common bodies of content such as “About us” being in the main nav, “Contact us” being in the footer. Thus, we will avoid having too much text crowding out the top navigations which would only compete for the user’s attention.