

Notes:

- In 2022, the DNR wildlife management questions are advisory only. We are generally on an every-other year cycle with rule proposals in odd-numbered years and advisory questions in even years.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT ADVISORY QUESTIONS

QUESTION 1: Increase the student registration fee for trapper education.

The cost of course materials, building rentals and other supplies have increased since 2008. The trapper education program expects cost will continue to rise over the next decade. The administrative rule process takes time and the trapper education program wants to gauge support for a fee increase to help fund the program.

The trapper education program is a cooperative effort between the Wisconsin Trappers Association and the WDNR. The Wisconsin Trappers Association (WTA) has expressed support for a small fee increase.

Trapper education provides trappers with information on furbearer management, Best Management Practices for trapping, rules and regulations, methods to avoid incidental take, trapping ethics, trapper responsibilities, ecology, biology, trap handling, pelt preparation, etc.

Trapper education has been mandatory in Wisconsin since May 1992.

In addition to course fees (instructors can retain up to 50% to cover instruction costs), the department receives \$2.00 from each trapping license and \$2.00 from each Patron license where the intent to trap is designated at the time of purchase. License numbers have been consistent over the last 20 years with approximately 20,000 licensed trappers.

QUESTION 2: Remove the requirement for youth hunters to have a goose permit for the youth season.

Currently a goose permit is the only harvest authorization that a youth waterfowl hunter is legally required to obtain to hunt during the youth waterfowl season. This was a requirement because historically we required all hunters to register their harvested Canada Geese. This requirement was removed in 2017 so youth hunters no longer need to have a permit number for reporting purposes.

QUESTION 3: Allow the purchase of multiple turkey harvest authorizations per day when the season is open for hunting.

Currently turkey hunters are allowed to harvest and register more than one turkey in one day as long as they possess multiple harvest authorizations for that time period and zone.

Since many harvest authorizations for early time periods are allocated during the drawing, only bonus harvest authorizations would be eligible for sale during the open season.

Since the harvest authorization levels are already divided by zone and time period, over harvest isn't anticipated as being a side effect of this rule change.

If the system of selling bonus harvest authorizations prior to open season (March 21-25 for 2022) is continued in the same first-come-first serve fashion, and hunters can only purchase authorizations for one zone per day during the pre-season period, any negative side effects of "hoarding" harvest authorizations is not anticipated with this rule change.

For reference in 2020 with record high harvest and hunter participation there were still approximately 21,000 unissued harvest authorizations at the end of the season.

QUESTION 4: Allow applicants to keep their preference points if they fail to apply for three years. (Requires legislation)

For some species, preference points accrued by an applicant are lost after three years of not applying. This may have helped with efficient record keeping but is less of an issue currently. The department could provide better customer service by allowing those preference points to remain in place over a longer period of inactivity. Retaining preference points for a longer period of time for thousands of applicants will increase data storage needs and costs but would reduce interactions between frustrated hunters and customer service staff.

Since most turkey hunters are awarded spring turkey harvest authorizations every year without preference points, and because preference points play a much less key role in awards (compared to bear or other species) it is not anticipated that this rule change would have any major impact on the current turkey drawing system.

There is high demand for bear licenses with some zones currently requiring 10 or more points to draw, while other zones currently require only one or two points to draw. In 2022, over 130,000 people applied for either a bear harvest license or preference point, continuing the trend of increasing total applications. Over the last three years, an average of 9,551 customers had their bear preference points expire due to not applying at least once in the last three years. The most likely reasons for them not applying include deceased customers, customer moved away, are no longer hunting or lack of knowledge of this requirement. This change would prevent some customers from losing previously acquired preference points due to lack of application. It is unknown if or how this change would impact wait times for a bear permit, however it is anticipated that the impact will be relatively small.

In years with regulated a wolf harvest season, 50% of available licenses are awarded based on cumulative preference points with the other 50% awarded at random. In years when wolves are federally protected, the state has no authority to hold a harvest season and does not accept applications for preference points or licenses. Accordingly, this rule only applies in years with an open application period and has therefore not affected those with accumulated wolf preference points to date.

Interest in bobcat permits remains high, although at a lower level than bear. In 2021, approximately 27,500 people applied for either a permit or preference point which was the highest level on record. Wait times vary by zone and time period. In 2021, a bobcat applicant needed a minimum of 2 preference points to draw a tag in the first time period and 2 points to draw a tag in the second time period for the Southern Zone. Not everyone with 2 points drew a permit. Applicants needed a minimum of 2 preference points to draw a tag in the first time period and 8 points to draw a tag in the second time period for the Northern Zone. Once again, not everyone with 2 or 8 points, respectively, drew a permit.

QUESTION 5: Have a single raccoon hunting season starting date. (Requires legislation)

Over the last 5 years, an average of 55 nonresident furbearer hunting licenses were sold annually. This is a relatively small number. Allowing nonresidents 2 additional weeks to harvest raccoons is not expected to impact raccoon populations.

We do not expect a large influx of nonresidents should this law change since most of our neighboring states have raccoon seasons that begin at the same time or prior to our resident season start date. In 2021 Wisconsin's resident raccoon season began Oct 16th and the nonresident season on October 30th. In 2021, Michigan's season began October 1st. Minnesota's northern raccoon zone began Oct 16th and the southern zone on Oct 23rd. Illinois season began November 10th. No other state has a separate resident and nonresident raccoon season. No other hunting or trapping season in Wisconsin is separated by resident and nonresident.

QUESTION 6: Remove the prohibition of hunting and trapping certain species by landowners without a permit during the 24-hour period prior to the firearm deer season. (Requires legislation)

Species allowed under this provision include beaver, coyotes, foxes, raccoons, woodchucks, rabbits, and squirrels. This is likely a holdover from when there was a quiet period for all hunting 24 hours prior to the start of the gun deer season.

DEER & ELK COMMITTEE ADVISORY QUESTION

QUESTION 1: Antler Point Restriction Trial in Florence County (190121)

Antler pint restriction rule (APR) proposals have been submitted for years, but this is the first one advanced by the WCC for a public vote. The question background states that Florence County buck harvest is lower than surrounding counties; however, in 2021 Florence buck harvest per square mile was 3rd highest among 19 Northern Forest Zone counties on private land, and 6th highest on public land. An APR would reduce buck harvest in the county.

QUESTIONS 2-4. Re-establish In-Person Deer Registration Stations, Back Tags, and Tagging Procedures (720321)

In-person registration also did not result in all deer being registered. A correction factor to account for unregistered deer has always been used, and harvest trends have not shifted in a way to indicate a change in compliance has occurred. Although it is true that not every deer gets registered, accuracy of data has actually increased, and real time access to registration data has been beneficial to law enforcement investigations. Few if any states require backtags any longer and license sale equipment no longer supports the printing of backtags. Most licenses are purchased online at home, making backtag acquisition an additional step that would be costly to support. Wisconsin is one of at least 12 states that no longer requires placing a tag on the carcass of the deer. This requirement was removed by the legislature, which would need to take action to replace it.

QUESTION 5: Deer Management Tool – Replacement Either Sex Tag for CWD positive Deer (530221)

This question acknowledges that antlerless harvest has been inadequate in many Farmland Zone DMUs, especially those with endemic CWD. The proposal attempts to create an incentive to increase antlerless harvest. The expectation is that some hunters may shoot an antlerless deer that otherwise may not, in order to earn an either-sex permit.

QUESTION 6: Extend the 9-day Gun Deer Registration Deadline (690121)

This is potentially more of a law enforcement issue than deer management, since registration by the end of the season would not affect deer management decisions. However, any registration compliance gained by those that would no longer be concerned about late registration, could be counteracted by those hunters that may be more likely to forget after a length of time between harvesting a deer and the registration requirement.

QUESTION 7: Youth Statewide Antlerless Permits (570121)

No concerns from a deer management standpoint. No further background required.

QUESTIONS 8-9. Reallocation of Funding to Establish a Statewide Dumpster Program for Handling Deer Carcass Disposal

Expansion of the dumpster program is not currently limited by budget constraints. Although the question reads “reallocation” of funds, the mechanism offered to eliminate Farmland Zone antlerless permits issued with each license is actually a creation of new funding. Current antlerless permit revenue is allocated to the deer damage program and CWD and is established in statute. Changing this to allocate more funds to CWD would require legislative action. If elimination of free Farmland Zone antlerless permits were to result in a reduction of antlerless deer harvest; this could be counterproductive to CWD goals.

QUESTION 10. Related to captive cervid operations (*Note: captive cervid farms are under the jurisdiction of DATCP, not the DNR)

As this question simply provides statistics related to deer farms and CWD, and seeks an opinion of support or opposition, no further background information from DNR is pertinent.

FUR HARVEST COMMITTEE ADVISORY QUESTION

QUESTION 25. Allow the use of rimfire rifles or handguns to dispatch trapped animals within 50 feet of the centerline of unpaved roads (040621, 720821)

Permission to trap on road rights-of-ways can be a complex issue. Most are owned either by the state or by the local unit of government. However, in some cases the adjoining landowner still maintains ownership of the underlying land. Trappers must have permission from the owner of the land underlying any public road, street or highway right-of-way area before trapping the location. The Department of Transportation has a policy that trapping is not allowed on DOT-owned roads.

QUESTION 26. Allow the use of traps with a jaw spread up to 8 inches for dryland sets beginning on the opening day of wolf season (040721, 090721, 560321)

Current regulations on jaw spread for dryland traps were established in the emergency rule package (EMR1210) related to the 2012 wolf season. Section 21 prohibits the use of foothold traps with a jaw spread of greater than 7" as non-water sets (i.e. dryland sets) during the early part of the wolf trapping season to reduce the incidental capture of certain non-target species including black bear and domestic dogs. Starting December 1st, foothold traps with a jaw spread of up to 8 inches can be used on dryland thru the end of the trapping season.

The wolf season start date has changed since the emergency rule went into effect in 2012. Previously, the wolf seasons start date was the Saturday closest to October 17th. Legislation now establishes the start date, in years with a regulated season, as the first Saturday in November.

QUESTION 27. Disabled Trapper Permit (100120)

TURKEY & UPLAND GAME COMMITTEE ADVISORY QUESTION

QUESTION 28. Hunting Small Game Mammals and Unprotected Species with a Slingshot and Small Game License (681221) (requires legislation)

Since the success and popularity of slingshot hunting is likely low there are no anticipated population level impacts.

For reference, slingshot hunting is legal in Michigan. It is not legal in Minnesota, Iowa, or Illinois.

WOL COMMITTEE ADVISORY QUESTIONS

QUESTION 29. Support wolf population goal of 350 or less wolves (090821, 440221, 720721, 470121, 350121)

The 1999 Wisconsin Wolf Management Plan included a management goal of 350 wolves outside of tribal reservations. The management goal "represented the minimum level at which a full array of population control activities could occur including pro-active depredation control and the possibility of public harvest" (page 16, 1999 plan). In the 23 years since the 1999 plan was first adopted, much has been learned regarding the wolf population in Wisconsin including a better understanding of wolf population carrying capacity, suitable habitats, and trends in conflict. The department is currently engaged in updating the state's wolf management plan and is expected to have a draft available for public review in spring 2022 and a plan ready for finalization in summer 2022.

OUTDOOR HERITAGE AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

QUESTION 32: Allow purple heart recipients to hunt over bait on private land at same time on odd years when dog hunters go first (040121) (requires legislation)

This change would likely have no significant biological impacts or changes to overall bear hunter success rates. It would only affect three bear management zones where use of dogs is currently allowed (A, B, D) apply only to Purple Heart recipients hunting on private land, and only relevant in odd-numbered years. The number of Purple Heart recipients with an awarded or transferred bear tag is expected to be relatively small in any given year.

QUESTION 35. Should DNR permit and regulate all hunting contests to control wanton waste, and carcass dumping

Individuals participating in organized hunts are required to adhere to all pertinent regulations, no different than if individually pursuing these species. The WDNR does not collect data specifically pertaining to organized hunts, but there has been no noticeable impact to furbearer populations in Wisconsin.

MIGRATORY COMMITTEE ADVISORY QUESTIONS

QUESTION 43. Legalize the use of "F" size shot for waterfowl hunting in Wisconsin (520521)

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ADVISORY QUESTIONS

QUESTION 40. Revised definition of a Muzzleloader (690221) (requires legislation)

This item does not require legislation.
There are no deer management implications with this question.

QUESTION 41. Use of PCP Air Guns (270121) (requires legislation)

Small game and unprotected species may currently be harvested with an air gun.

The use of pneumatic air guns/bows varies by state and species. There are several states that currently allow the use of air guns for various big game, including deer, elk, black bear, and wolf. There are a number of other states which have prohibited the use of air guns/bows. Requirements of .35 caliber or greater for deer and .45 caliber or greater for elk and bear seem generally consistent with minimum caliber requirements in other states.

MISCELLANEOUS ADVISORY QUESTIONS

The following questions were not advanced by a Wisconsin Conservation Congress Committee, but met the requirements from the WCC's Code of Procedures which states that "any same or like resolution that has passed in at least the same three counties for two consecutive years shall be forwarded, at the request of the author(s), to the statewide ballot" (WCC COP XI.D.2).

44. Ban dogs from hunting wolves in Wisconsin (411221) (requires legislation)

Wisconsin statutes permit wolf harvest license holders to use up to six dogs to aid in wolf hunting. The use of dogs is allowed beginning the first Monday following the close of the 9-day gun deer season (whereas wolf season opens on the first Saturday of November). Use of dogs was not allowed in the inaugural 2012 Wisconsin wolf season due to ongoing litigation. The use of dogs was allowed in 2013, 2014, and Feb. 2021 wolf seasons. In 2013, one wolf harvest zone remained open to harvest long enough to allow the aid of dogs and 35 wolves were harvested via this method (14% of total harvest). In 2014, two zones remained open to harvest long enough to allow the aid of dogs and 6 wolves were harvested via this method (4% of total harvest). In February 2021, aid of dogs was available for the duration of the season and 188 wolves were taken via this method (86% of total harvest). Individuals pursuing wolves with the aid of dogs are not eligible for compensation if dogs are injured or killed while in pursuit of wolves. Currently, Idaho is the only other state in the USA with a regulated wolf season that allows the aid of dogs in harvesting wolves; their use is restricted to certain locations in the state whereas their use is allowed statewide in Wisconsin. Past wolf seasons indicate that harvest quotas can be achieved with and/or without the aid of dogs.

45. End All Killing Contests

Organized hunts are hosted by local groups, and the WDNR isn't directly involved in their establishment or implementation. Individuals participating in organized hunts are required to adhere to all pertinent regulations, no different than if individually pursuing these species.

Anyone witnessing or knowing of illegal activity occurring, should immediately call the DNR Confidential Hotline at 1-800-TIP-WDNR (800-847-9367). Conservation wardens appropriately engage in proactive patrol, as well as respond to received complaints, to ensure compliance with Wisconsin's fish and game regulations.

Hunting seasons in Wisconsin are managed through scientifically based regulations. The WDNR continually reviews rules, regulations and hunting/trapping methods to maintain harvest at a sustainable level while preserving animal welfare standards. The WDNR does not collect data specifically pertaining to organized coyote hunts, but there has been no noticeable impact to coyote populations in Wisconsin. Coyotes are extremely adaptable, inhabit all Wisconsin counties and can be found in both rural and urban areas. Coyotes have the ability to adjust their litter sizes based on food abundance and population density. Litter sizes often range from four to seven pups, though litters can be bigger or smaller.