2022 Natural Resources Board Advisory Questions

1. Review crossbow impacts on deer harvest

The Natural Resources Board continues to hear growing concerns about the disproportionate number of bucks harvested prior to the Gun Deer Season. This concern was addressed by the Legislature with the passage of the original crossbow bill and the final version of the bill gave the DNR authority to review and adjust the crossbow season if necessary. Since the DNR's last review the percent of bucks harvested by crossbows has continued to increase and crossbow technology has exploded far beyond what anyone could have imagined in 2013. While many other states touted significant increases in deer hunting license sales during the pandemic bump, Wisconsin's gun deer licenses sales continued to decline, and in the last 20 years deer hunters have declined by about 100,000. It is expressed by many that with around 40% of the bucks harvested before the start of the Gun Deer Season, Wisconsin's famous and long-standing Traditional Gun Deer Season is in jeopardy.

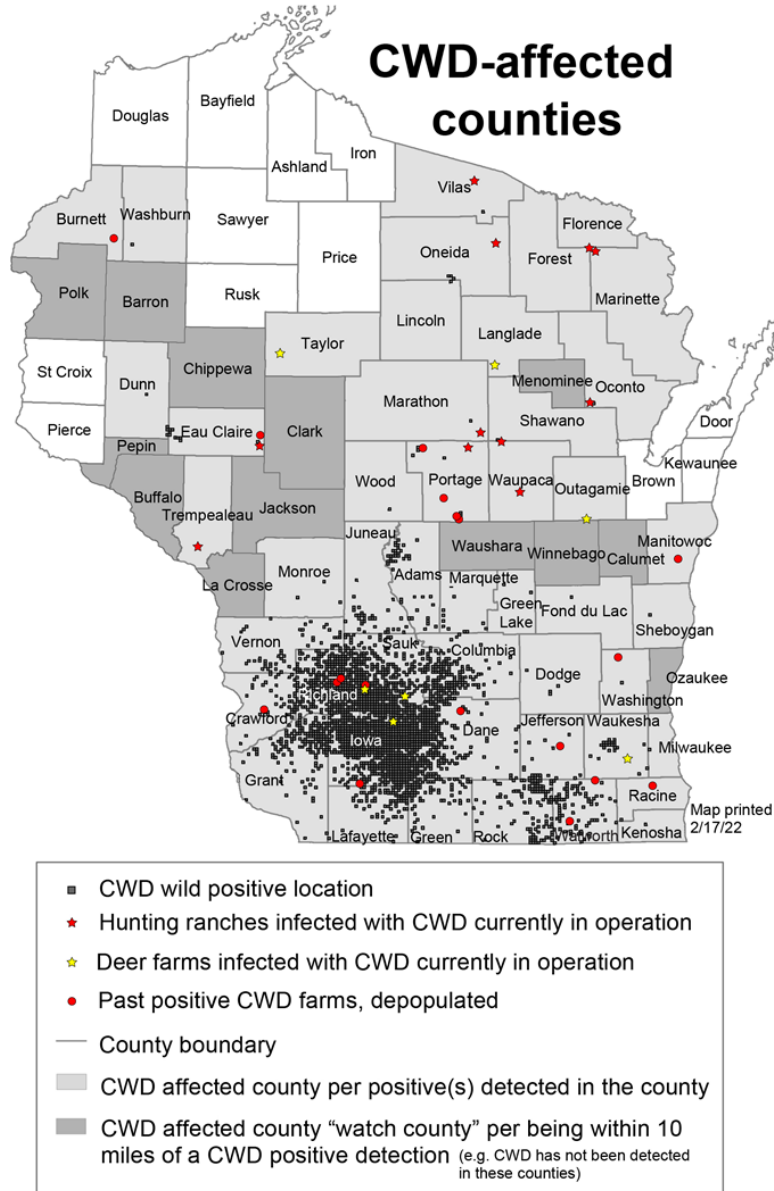| 1. Would you support the Natural Resources Board requesting from the Department another review of the impacts of the crossbow season on Wisconsin's Gun Deer Season?	1. Yes__ No__	No opinion__

2. Reducing prevalence, increase testing and slowing the spread of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)

February 28th marked the 20th year since CWD was detected in Wisconsin. Annual surveillance data has shown a steady growth in the number of counties where CWD has been found in the wild deer herd. Where CWD has become established the estimated local prevalence in the herd in many impacted areas has reached high and undesirable levels. It's clear that CWD is a very difficult disease to manage and available regulatory actions have not been adequate to control the spread or prevalence of CWD.

Collaborative scientific research to identify how best to reduce the spread and prevalence of CWD are underway across the country. Recently, a CWD systems analyst working in partnership with the National Wildlife Health Center and the Wisconsin DNR in the 2nd five-year review of Wisconsin's CWD Response Plan, produced a graphic of what the population of positive deer in the state might look like through a simple estimate as part of a predictive model building exercise. While that estimate simply took county deer population estimates multiplied by the fraction positive in the harvest, and both of these factors are possibly subject to measurement biases, it was estimated that Wisconsin had 50,000 CWD+ on the landscape after the 2020 deer hunt and that this number has been growing at 25% per year. While the model needs more testing and multiple iterations to be accurate, it does exemplify that if we want to reduce prevalence and slow the spread of CWD in Wisconsin we must start reducing that number.

Like many federal farm bill conservation programs, a state healthy herd incentive payment would reward landowners and hunters working to fight this disease. To be effective, the incentives would need to be set high enough to ensure good participation and the department would need to provide detailed maps of CWD presence and prevalence. In addition, the department would need legislative spending authority and funding partners to implement the study.

CWD-affected counties

Douglas Bayfield Ashland Iron Vilas ★
Burnett Washburn Sawyer Price Oneida ★ Florence Forest
Polk Barron Rusk Lincoln Langlade Marinette
St Croix Dunn Chippewa Taylor ☆ Menominee Oconto
Pierce Pepin Eau Claire Clark Marathon Shawano Door
Buffalo Trempealeau Jackson Wood Portage Waupaca Outagamie Brown Kewaunee
La Crosse Monroe Juneau Waushara Winnebago Calumet Manitowoc
Vernon Adams Marquette Green Lake Fond du Lac Sheboygan
Crawford Richland Sauk Columbia Dodge Washington Ozaukee
Grant Iowa Dane Jefferson Waukesha Milwaukee
Lafayette Green Rock Walworth Racine Kenosha

Map printed 2/17/22

Legend:
- ■ CWD wild positive location
- ★ Hunting ranches infected with CWD currently in operation
- ☆ Deer farms infected with CWD currently in operation
- ● Past positive CWD farms, depopulated
- — County boundary
- CWD affected county per positive(s) detected in the county
- CWD affected county "watch county" per being within 10 miles of a CWD positive detection (e.g. CWD has not been detected in these counties)

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2. Do you support having the Wisconsin DNR undertake a 2-year pilot project to test if offering a healthy herds incentive payment to landowners and hunters can increase the testing rates and remove CWD+ deer to levels effective in reducing prevalence and slowing disease spread?

2. Yes__   No__   No opinion__