

2024 DNR and WCC Spring Hearings Questions

2024 DNR Fisheries Management Advisory Questions

1. Development of an administrative pathway for faster angling regulation changes in situation of conservation need

In Wisconsin, there is an administrative rule-making pathway for prompt angling regulation changes that can be used in instances when slow growth of a particular fish species has been documented or when reverting to the default or statewide regulation. Unfortunately, this pathway cannot currently be used to address an immediate conservation need, such as a declining walleye population where natural reproduction is found to be failing. In these cases, the ability to move to a conservative harvest regulation promptly could help move the fish population onto the path to recovery. Timely management actions, including angling regulation changes, are sometimes needed to protect fisheries from further decline and/or to begin rehabilitative efforts. The current two- to three-year process for changing angling regulations in Wisconsin can hinder the efforts of fish biologists and local partners when immediate, long-term rehabilitative action is needed, leaving fish populations vulnerable to harm.

1. Do you favor the department working with the Conservation Congress to develop an administrative pathway that would allow for faster angling regulation changes in instances where an adequate amount of data show an immediate need for preservation and restoration of a population of a naturally reproducing native or naturalized fish species?

2. Trout inland stream, spring and spring pond season opener

This proposal would gauge public input on changing the general open season for trout in inland streams, springs, and spring ponds to the first Saturday in April through October 15. The current general open season for trout in inland streams, springs, and spring ponds is the first Saturday in May at 5 a.m. through October 15.

The management goal is to provide anglers additional opportunities for trout harvest, which will not negatively impact trout populations. Recent creel, angler and fish population surveys show trout harvest levels are generally low. Fish population monitoring has shown stable to increasing trout populations. Allowing for an earlier harvest season would provide additional fishing opportunity when fishing conditions are good for streamside fishing. From June through September some trout resources, particularly smaller streams, are not accessible due to riparian vegetation growth. Opening the season in early April will add additional days in which anglers can fish these otherwise inaccessible waters and allow anglers to fish for other species such as white suckers. Another benefit of an early harvest opener would be to help reduce the abundance of trout in high-density streams when fishing conditions are most optimal. Some streams in Wisconsin have a very high abundance of trout. High population abundance may affect growth and size structure. Reducing densities in these streams through harvest could improve growth rates and size structure and lead to a higher quality fishery. Nearby states such as Minnesota have a mid-April harvest opener and Iowa has a year-round harvest season. This proposal may improve tourism in local communities near trout streams for anglers that choose to harvest fish rather than having to travel to a neighboring state for this early harvest opportunity. Opening trout harvest the first Saturday of April will extend the harvest season by approximately 23 to 30 days.

2. Do you favor changing the statewide general open season for trout and salmon in inland streams, springs, and spring ponds to the first Saturday in April at 5 a.m. through October 15?

3. Simplify statewide inland trout regulations

Currently two inland trout regulation categories are used as county base regulations for waterbodies not specifically assigned a specific trout regulation. They are:

- 5 trout in total with no size limit (green regulation)
- 3 trout in total with an 8-inch size limit (yellow regulation)

This advisory question seeks to obtain feedback on eliminating the 3 trout in total with an 8" size limit regulation so that the 5 trout in total with no size limit regulation would serve as the default county base regulation for waters without a specific trout regulation. With a strong catch and release ethic demonstrated through creel surveys, and a size preference starting at 8 inches for keeping trout, lower minimum length limits such as 8 inches are no longer needed on the majority of trout water. Removing this regulation will not negatively impact trout populations, and waters on which the yellow regulation has been specifically established will not be affected by this change.

3. Do you favor having only one statewide county base regulation of 5 trout in total with no minimum size limit?

4. Allow motor trolling with up to 3 hooks, baits or lures per angler on all inland waters

"Trolling" means fishing by trailing a lure or bait from a boat being propelled by any means other than drifting or rowing. Trolling is currently allowed with 1 "line" (i.e., 1 hook, bait or lure) per angler (and a maximum of 3 "lines" per boat) on inland waters in Florence, Iron, Lincoln, Oneida, Sawyer (selected waters), Sheboygan, Vilas, and Waupaca Counties (11%). All other counties (88%) allow trolling with 3 "lines" (i.e., 3 hooks, baits or lures) per angler.

The current rule has been in place since April of 2018. Upon adoption of the current rule, the department committed to evaluating the potential negative impacts of trolling on walleye and muskellunge. Using an analysis of creel survey data from 2014 to 2022 (106 walleye lakes and 71 muskellunge lakes) comparing casting and trolling in lakes where either 1 "line" or 3 "lines" are allowed per angler, the department has concluded that there are no adverse impacts on angler catch rates (fish caught per hour), harvest rates (fish kept per hour), average length of kept fish, or fishing pressure, due to trolling. Casting accounts for the vast majority of the fishing pressure directed at walleye and muskellunge, and trolling results in either similar or significantly lower angler catch and harvest rates, depending on the species and type of waterbody. Trolling with 3 "lines" has no adverse biological impacts compared to casting or trolling with 1 "line" per angler. Allowing trolling with 3 "lines" per angler statewide: 1) eliminates confusion about where trolling is allowed with 1 "line" versus 3 "lines" per angler; 2) still allows anglers to trail a sucker or other minnow while casting and retrieving another lure; 3) eliminates the need for disabled anglers to apply for a trolling permit; and 4) provides additional fishing opportunities for anglers who may have more difficulty fishing by other methods.

4. Do you favor allowing trolling with 3 "lines" (i.e., hook, bait, or lure) per angler on all inland waters of Wisconsin?

5. Lake sturgeon hook and line catch-and-release opportunities

This advisory question pertains to establishing a catch-and-release hook and line fishing season for lake sturgeon from the first Saturday in June to the first Sunday in March on specific waterbodies with healthy sturgeon populations, including:

Waterbody (including all sloughs, bayous, and flowages)	Upstream Boundary	Upstream Boundary Counties	Downstream Boundary	Downstream Boundary Counties
Wisconsin River	WPS Dam in Merrill (Alexander Dam)	Lincoln	Confluence with Mississippi River	Crawford/Grant
Black River	Black River Falls Dam	Jackson	Confluence with Mississippi River	La Crosse
Chippewa River	Chippewa Flowage Dam	Sawyer	Confluence with the Mississippi River	Buffalo/Pepin
West Fork Chippewa River	Moose Lake Dam	Sawyer	Chippewa Flowage Dam	Sawyer
East Fork Chippewa River	Source	Ashland	Chippewa Flowage Dam	Sawyer
Jump River	Confluence of its North and South forks	Price	Confluence with Chippewa River	Chippewa
Eau Claire River	Lake Altoona Dam	Eau Claire	Confluence with Chippewa River	Eau Claire
Red Cedar River	Lake Menomin Dam	Dunn	Confluence with Chippewa River	Dunn
Flambeau River	Confluence of Manitowish and Bear rivers	Iron	Confluence with Chippewa River	Rusk
Manitowish River	Rest Lake Dam	Vilas	Confluence with Flambeau River	Iron
Bear River	Lac du Flambeau Dam	Vilas	Confluence with Flambeau River	Iron
Little Turtle River	Lake of the Falls Dam	Iron	Confluence with Flambeau River	Iron
Butternut Lake	Inlet	Ashland	Outlet	Price
South Fork Flambeau River	Round Lake Dam	Price	Confluence with Flambeau River	Sawyer
St. Croix River	Source	Douglas	Saint Croix Dam	Douglas
Eau Claire River	Lower Eau Claire Lake Dam	Douglas	Confluence with St. Croix River	Douglas
Namekagon River	Hayward Dam	Sawyer	Confluence with St. Croix River	Burnett
Menominee River	Sturgeon Falls Dam	Marinette	Park Mill Dam	Marinette

Lake sturgeon hook and line opportunities in Wisconsin vary based on location. Lake sturgeon can legally be targeted on specified inland waters and boundary waters with hook and line during the hook and line harvest season which runs from the first Saturday in September to September 30. It is illegal to target lake sturgeon, including for catch and release, on other inland waters or outside the hook and line harvest season on specified waters.

Other states that border Wisconsin such as Minnesota and Michigan have eight- to nine-month catch and release seasons for lake sturgeon on specific waterbodies. Typical fishing methods used for targeting lake sturgeon are also used by catfish and rough fish anglers. Habitat utilization by lake sturgeon, catfish and rough

fish overlap as well. Therefore, lake sturgeon are caught routinely during the closed season and it is difficult to determine if anglers are illegally targeting lake sturgeon during this time.

Recently, the DNR conducted a lake sturgeon hooking mortality study to determine if expanding sturgeon angling opportunities would have negative biological effects on their populations. This study took place on multiple lake sturgeon fisheries throughout the state and across a range of water temperatures. No lake sturgeon mortality was observed during the two weeks post-angling event. Additionally, physiological impacts of the angling event on individual sturgeon were low with a high proportion of individuals in all locations considered recovered immediately and not impaired post-angling. It is anticipated that expanding the catch and release opportunities will have very little, if any, negative impacts on lake sturgeon populations.

Lake sturgeon surveys conducted by the DNR around the state show strong sturgeon populations in most waterbodies where lake sturgeon exist. Surveys also have shown populations growing in size in waterbodies that previously had small or remnant populations of lake sturgeon.

Furthermore, expanding the catch and release season and standardizing regulations were identified as tactics under Objective 4.2 of the Wisconsin's Sturgeon Management Plan: 1.) Standardize sturgeon fishing regulations to the greatest degree possible; 2.) Use best available information to evaluate risks of expanding both harvest and catch and release opportunities for Lake Sturgeon. Options should include both opening new waters to hook and line angling and potential changes in season structure.

In addition, during the 2022 Spring Hearings two Advisory Questions were proposed and there was public support on about a 2:1 margin for "creating a catch-and-release season for lake sturgeon on a subset of waterbodies already open to lake sturgeon hook and line harvest," and "expanding hook and line catch-and-release opportunities to additional waters."

5. Do you favor creating a catch-and-release season from the first Saturday in June to the end of the first Sunday in March for lake sturgeon on a subset of waterbodies where lake sturgeon populations are determined to be healthy enough to support these activities? This proposal would maintain the existing hook and line harvest season, and anglers would not need a harvest tag to catch and release lake sturgeon. See table for specific waterbodies where the C&R would be applied.

6. Lower Wisconsin River shovelnose sturgeon season closure

Currently, the shovelnose sturgeon fishery on the Lower Wisconsin River has a continuous open fishing season that utilizes a 3-fish daily bag limit and no minimum size limit (established in 2001-2002). Recent creel data, fishery concerns from DNR Law Enforcement, and population research have indicated that the current regulations may not be entirely appropriate for the long-term viability of shovelnose sturgeon in the Lower Wisconsin River. In particular, these findings indicate the need to implement more restrictive regulations to protect spawning populations of shovelnose sturgeon, such as through a shovelnose sturgeon season closure.

Recent creel survey data and shovelnose sturgeon fishery concerns have emerged in the Lower Wisconsin River. A 2020-2021 creel survey in the Lower Wisconsin River documented a significant fishery expansion, where shovelnose sturgeon went from being historically not targeted to the 5th most targeted species in 2020-2021. Monthly shovelnose angling data indicated that 54% of the total catch occurs in May-July and 73% of the total harvest occurs in May-June. These high catch and harvest rates during spring spawning period confirms the DNR's understanding that shovelnose sturgeon are most vulnerable to fishing during their spawning period. Beyond the creel survey, DNR Law Enforcement have reported an increased prevalence in group fishing for shovelnose sturgeon in past 5-10 years. Currently, the incidence of group fishing occurs in

approximated 66% of enforcement visits to the Lower Wisconsin River. Group fishing is concerning to Law Enforcement because it masks when over-bagging violations occur, particularly so for shovelnose sturgeon.

New research on shovelnose sturgeon life history and spawning ecology have given fresh insight about stock assessment of the Lower Wisconsin River population. We now know that shovelnose sturgeon can live in excess of 40 years, which is 10-20 years higher than previous estimates of longevity. This could have significant management implications since longer-lived fish can be prone to harvest impacts. Additionally, otolith microchemistry and spawning habitat studies have identified the Lower Wisconsin River as having significant spawning habitats during spring to early summer for shovelnose populations in the Lower Wisconsin and Mississippi rivers. Therefore, increased shovelnose sturgeon harvest during spring spawning period could have implications for both populations.

It is important for the DNR to implement regulations to better protect adult spawning fish in the Lower Wisconsin River. As an initial step towards improving shovelnose sturgeon management on the river, closing spring fishing may help law enforcement and help to limit harvest of adult shovelnose during this critical period. Similar regulations have been implemented regionally in the Mississippi River basin to protect spawning fish.

6. Do you favor closing the shovelnose sturgeon fishing season on the Lower Wisconsin River below the Prairie Du Sac Dam to the confluence with the Mississippi River to protect spawning fish that are vulnerable to fishing from the Monday following the first Sunday in March to the Friday preceding the first Saturday in July?

7. Winnebago System white bass daily bag limit

Winnebago system waters defined: Winnebago System Waters include Poygan, Winneconne, Butte des Morts, and Winnebago and all their tributaries from their mouths upstream to the first dam including the Fox river from Lake Winnebago upstream to the dam above Princeton and all its tributaries from their mouths upstream to the first dam; the Wolf river from its mouth upstream to the dam in the city of Shawano and all its tributaries from their mouths upstream to the first dam including Cincoe lake, Partridge Crop lake and Partridge lake in Calumet, Fond du Lac, Green Lake, Marquette, Outagamie, Shawano, Waupaca, Waushara and Winnebago counties.

This question would assess public support for a daily bag limit of 25 in total for white bass on the Winnebago System while the department is in the process of collecting and assessing relevant data. There is currently no bag limit on white bass in the Winnebago System. Over the last 12 years the department has observed a decrease in white bass catch rates in the Winnebago trawl survey and more recently there has been an increase in public concern over excessive harvest, leading to resource manager consideration of a white bass bag limit.

White bass catch rates in the trawl survey have been relatively low over the last 12 years for both adult and young of year (YOY) fish. The last substantial year class was in 2011 and adult populations have shown slight fluctuation in the years since then but have been in a general downward trend. Winnebago system white bass have been shown to display boom or bust population cycles, so this period of lower catch rates is not far from typical trends, but the persistence and degree of these lower catch rates have raised interest amongst resource managers for the establishment of a bag limit. There are several instances found in the trawling data that show Winnebago system fish of multiple species being capable of pulling off large year classes and

rebounding population abundances. A similar occurrence is most likely possible for white bass, though the prolonged periods of decreased trawl catch is notable.

White bass continue to be a highly targeted and valued species on the Winnebago system. Angler experiences can vary drastically with some individuals reporting impressive catch numbers and others being much less successful. While white bass catch rates in the trawl survey have been consistently low, there is at least measurable catch of adult and YOY white bass every year and angling opportunities continue to exist around the system.

7. Do you favor establishing a 25-fish daily bag limit on white bass in Winnebago System waters?

2024 DNR Wildlife Management Advisory Questions

8. Allow some deer parts to be left in the field after harvest

Wisconsin's current deer quartering rule requires all deer parts (minus the entrails) to be removed from the field after harvest. This rule primarily affects public land hunters, who unlike most private land hunters, don't have access to groomed trails or motor vehicle assistance and requires the hunter to manually remove the entire deer from point of harvest to wherever their vehicle is located. Since in-person deer registration is no longer required, this rule puts unnecessary strain on Wisconsin's hunters (especially youth and aging hunter demographic) and discourages deer harvest when hunting far from a vehicle or in difficult to reach areas that are not conducive to carting a deer out, which is often required when hunting public lands. Many western states have successfully adopted regulation allowing hunters to quarter or completely debone harvested game and leave "non-edible" carcass material at the site of harvest. Adopting similar language would encourage Wisconsin hunters to hunt farther from roadways/parking lots potentially reducing hunting pressure and could also potentially reduce disease spread and the number of deer carcasses that end up in public parking lots, access trails and along roadside ditches by allowing hunters to leave "non-edible" material at the site of harvest and eliminating the requirement of removing the entire harvested deer from the field. Additional benefits for allowing this rule include preventing potential CWD infectious material from being transmitted to a different site that may not contain CWD Prions if not properly disposed of in a landfill should the animal be infected and completely removed and potentially reducing the amount of littering of carcasses by allowing non-utilized parts to remain in remote locations where harvested.

8. Do you support allowing hunters who quarter their deer in the field to leave non-edible parts at the site of harvest?

9. Create two woodcock zones

Currently, Wisconsin holds a 45-day woodcock season that starts on the Saturday nearest September 22nd and runs 45 consecutive days into November. During most years, the woodcock migration has peaked or the ground is frozen in northern Wisconsin by the closure of woodcock season in November, however, there are still migrating woodcock passing through southern Wisconsin through the month of November during years without major snow events or freeze up.

The federal migratory framework allows states to have multiple woodcock zones with different opening and closing dates. Wisconsin could establish two woodcock zones with the same start and end date as the current

season for a northern zone and two week later start and end date for a southern zone to maximize woodcock hunting opportunity in WI.

9. Would you support the department pursuing the establishment of a northern and southern woodcock zone in Wisconsin?

10. Extend the fall turkey season in zones 6 and 7

The fall turkey season opens statewide each year on the Saturday nearest September 15th. In turkey zones 1-5, the season closes on the Sunday nearest January 6th. In zones 6 and 7, the department has closed the season on the Friday before the Thanksgiving holiday. This early closure was done out of concerns that harsh winters in the northern part of the state could potentially impact turkey populations. However, the turkey populations in zones 6 and 7 have grown to the point that the department believe the season can be extended to additional fall hunting opportunity without negatively impacting the population.

10. Do you support extending the fall turkey season in zones 6 & 7?

11. Remove landowner preference for the spring turkey drawing *(requires legislation)*

Wild turkeys were first reintroduced to Wisconsin in 1976 in Vernon County with subsequent releases taking place in other counties. By 1983 the turkey population was large enough to sustain a limited spring turkey season. The initial spring turkey seasons were limited to areas located in the southwest part of the state with the vast majority of land within the turkey hunting zones being privately owned. State statute established a preference point system for issuing turkey hunting permits. In order to encourage landowners in these areas to allow other members of the public to harvest a public resource found primarily on private land, first preference was given and up to 20% of all permits were issued to landowners who owned 50 acres of land in a turkey hunting zone. Those landowners claiming this preference had to agree to allow other persons to hunt wild turkey on that land if permission was first obtained. Subsequent legislation increased the number of permits issued to qualified landowners to up to 30% of the total spring turkey permits issued.

Turkeys have since expanded to every county in the state, including areas that have large amounts of public land. For the 2004 spring season, the statute was changed to remove the requirement that landowners must allow other persons to hunt on their land if they receive the landowner preference in the drawing. As a result of this change, individuals who have the means to own 50 acres of land or more get a higher preference than other non-landowning turkey hunters, for 30% of the total spring turkey permits issued, based on the landowners first choice zone and time period only. No other limited draw species in Wisconsin gives landowners first preference for a permit. Removing the landowner preference category would give all resident turkey hunters equal opportunity in the drawing.

11. Do you support legislation that would remove the landowner preference category for the spring turkey drawing?

12. Have a single raccoon hunting season starting date *(requires legislation)*

State statute mandates the department open the season for raccoon harvest for residents two weeks earlier than for non-residents. This law first went into effect in 1982. This was during a time when fur prices were

higher and there was a greater competition for the resource. Today, both the number of hunters and trappers who actively pursue raccoons and the number of raccoons harvested per year have dropped significantly from the highs in the in late 1970s and early 1980s. This reduces the perceived competition from nonresidents.

The staggered opening days of the raccoon hunting season for residents and non-residents contribute to season complexity. No other hunting or trapping season has a different opening date based on being a resident. The DNR is not aware of any significant competition for this resource or overcrowding that would support the continued approach of having separate opening dates. Additionally, many neighboring states have seasons that open around the same time or even earlier than Wisconsin's, decreasing the likelihood that large amounts of nonresident hunters and trappers will overwhelm the resource. In 2023, Wisconsin's resident raccoon season opened on October 14th, Minnesota's earliest raccoon season also opened on October 14th and Michigan's season opened on October 1st. Iowa now has a year-round open raccoon season on private lands.

12. Do you support legislation that would create a single raccoon hunting season starting date for both residents and nonresidents?

2024 Wisconsin Conservation Congress Spring Hearing Advisory Questions

Warm Water Committee

13. Reduce the panfish daily bag limit on Wadley Lake (Marathon County) to 10 panfish in total (370423)

Wadley Lake has a daily bag limit of 25 panfish total. For a small lake (46 acres) with easy access and close to populated areas, the quality panfish fishery has been impacted by increased fishing pressure. The lake has bluegill, black crappie, and yellow perch in it. Black crappies are now rare to catch. The Wadley Lake Sportsman's Club feels that a regulation change limiting the bag limit to 10 in total would improve the number and size of panfish in the lake.

13. Would you support reducing the daily bag limit to 10 panfish in total on Wadley Lake, Marathon County?

14. Reduce panfish harvest on McDill Pond, Portage County (500323)

Currently, McDill Pond has a daily bag limit of 25 panfish in total. The lake is centrally located in the heart of Steven's Point. McDill Pond is only 247 acres. Size structure of bluegills and crappies have gone down considerably. The lake receives heavy fishing pressure year-round. With a change in the bag limit to 10 panfish per day, it is felt that both panfish size structure and abundance will improve.

14. Would you support reducing the daily bag limit of panfish on McDill Pond in Portage County from 25 to 10 panfish to maintain and improve panfish abundance and size?

15. Willow Flowage panfish bag limit (640623)

Panfish numbers on the Willow Flowage are lower than on many natural lakes in the area, however the lake produces above average growth rates for black crappies, bluegills, and perch. Fishing pressure is high for all

three species, particularly in the fall and winter. Due to some years' summer drawdowns at spawning time, bluegill numbers may decrease. Too much overharvest of panfish has negatively affected the abundance and size structure of panfish in the Willow Flowage. Some think that limiting the number of each species that can be harvested, may help improve the abundance and size structure on the Willow Flowage.

15. Would you support a change in the management toolbox to allow for a 25 fish bag limit on panfish, but not more than 10 panfish per species on the Willow Flowage in Oneida County?

16. Eliminate the use of submerged artificial light sources that attract and school fish and aquatic life. (670123)

Numerous submersible light sources are sold as fish and aquatic life attractants. These lights create unnatural swarms of plankton, bait fish, and ultimately game fish. These lights are unregulated in Wisconsin. When left to operate for hours, often unattended, these lights artificially attract newly hatched fry and young of the year fish by the hundreds and thousands. Larger predatory fish drawn to this unnatural mass of young fish threaten to significantly impact the year class survival of various species.

At least two states, Minnesota and North Dakota, and the province of Ontario outlaw the use of artificial light to lure, attract, or spot fish. This resolution would not apply to handheld or body-attached lights used by scuba divers when simply diving, but not fishing. It would also not apply to glowing or luminous hook and line fishing lures and lights attached to underwater camera systems that support camera function without intent to attract fish.

16. Do you support making it illegal to use submerged artificial light sources for the intent of attracting and schooling fish and other aquatic life in Wisconsin waters for the purposes of fishing?

17. Reduce panfish bag limit from 25 to 10 on Amy Belle Lake in Washington County (670223)

Amy Belle Lake is a small fishery in Washington County and is subject to the standard daily bag limit of 25 panfish per day. The proximity to Milwaukee allows significant pressure to this small fishery (30-acre lake). Changing the regulation to a 10 daily bag limit for all panfish species in aggregate on Amy Belle Lake could broaden opportunity and may help to maintain and improve panfish size structure and population abundance.

17. Would you support changing the daily bag limit on panfish on Amy Belle Lake in Washington County to 10 per day (all species in aggregate)?

18. Establish a 15-inch size limit for walleye and sauger on the Winnebago system, including all of the Fox and Wolf River up to the first impassable dam (200123)

The Winnebago system, despite a reduction in the daily bag limit from 5 to 3, still experiences a high exploitation rate. To protect the smaller sized walleye and sauger, some feel a 15-inch size limit, as in most state waters, is needed.

18. Would you support raising the size limit on the Winnebago system walleye and sauger to 15 inches?

19. Establish a daily bag limit for white bass (200223)

Despite being a popular target for fishing, white bass currently have no daily bag limit in Wisconsin. During the spring spawning run, and during winter congregations, white bass exploitation is high. Some feel a bag limit should be established to prevent overexploitation.

19. Would you support a daily bag limit of 25 white bass per day?

20. Reduce panfish bag limit on Wolf Lake (Fond du Lac County) to 10 fish (200323)

Wolf Lake, a 75 acre 47' deep drainage lake, has a below average panfish population compared to other lakes of its size. Surveys in 2019 show a population decline from 2008 numbers. Bluegills have become scarce. Reducing the bag limit should allow for a quicker recovery.

20. Would you support reducing the daily bag to 10 pan fish on Wolf Lake (Fond du Lac County)?

21. Remove size limit on northern pike on the Sheboygan River (Fond du Lac County) (200523)

The Fond du Lac portion of the Sheboygan River currently has a 2-fish bag limit, 26" size limit on northern pike. From Sheboygan Lake upstream to Fond du Lac County the bag limit is five with no size limit. Changing the size and bag limit on the Sheboygan River in Fond du Lac County to match the regulations in Sheboygan County would improve regulation consistency and simplification.

21. Would you support removing the size limit and increasing the daily bag limit to 5 northern pike on the Sheboygan River in Fond du Lac County to match restrictions in Sheboygan County?

22. Ban live scopes and 360° imaging locations in Wisconsin waters (280123)

With the ability of these types of units to detect fish, as far as 180' from the user, anglers have become more efficient at locating and catching fish. This type of pressure could reduce fish populations, which may lead to reduced bag limits for anglers.

22. Would you support banning the use of live scopes, and similar 360° imaging electronics in all Wisconsin waters?

23. Reduce the daily bag limit for panfish on Mary Lake (Langlade County) (340223)

Mary Lake is a 153-acre lake largely bordered by Nicolet National Forest. Due to its proximity to several towns and ease of access it is susceptible to overfishing, especially of its yellow perch population. The Mary Lake Protection and Rehabilitation District believes the lake is too small to sustain healthy panfish populations at this level of harvest with the current daily bag limit of 25 panfish in total.

23. Would you support a reduced panfish bag limit to 15/5 on Mary Lake (Langlade County)?

24. New pan fish limit (370223)

The panfish study and reduced regulation for panfish, have identified a need for different regulations. Some feel an aggregate bag limit of 10, with no more than five being crappie would be appropriate to help make gains in both bluegills and crappies.

24. Would you support a 10 panfish aggregate bag limit for panfish, but only 5 may be crappie for the DNR's toolbox?

Legislative Committee

25. Allow the DNR to sell voluntary asset tags for valuable recreational equipment via Go Wild. (130123)
(requires legislation)

In many industries, assets are tracked by permanently affixing asset tags to identify them. The citizens of Wisconsin lose valuable personal property every year, whether it's from theft, misuse, weather, accidents, etc. Offering voluntary registration of these items with an asset tag not only provides a public service, it saves citizens time when reporting a lost/stolen item and law enforcement could easily return property, if recovered. Additionally, concerning situations like an empty watercraft blown onto a lake by wind, could easily be resolved by checking with the owner if this was accidental or if an emergency response is needed. The DNR could offer voluntary registration via mailing of asset tags through Go Wild and/or have them in stock at service centers for the convenience of the public. Asset tags could be implemented with a unique code. Registration could come with a fee with the fee amount adjusted every 3-5 years. The revenue would be used to enhance operations and community access to lakes and streams.

At registration, the customer would describe the personal property and if the unfortunate occurs, customers could log into Go Wild and mark the personal property as lost or stolen.

25. Would you support an asset tag for recreational valuables like personal watercraft, portable ice shanties, non-motorized boats, canoes, kayaks and more, to facilitate return and identification in emergency situations?

26. Designating the monarch butterfly as Wisconsin's state butterfly (450123) *(requires legislation)*

The population of the monarch butterfly has continued to decline in Wisconsin. If the monarch butterfly becomes our state butterfly, more citizens may take action to support raising monarchs, either at home, their businesses, schools, nature centers or at public parks.

26. Would you support the Conservation Congress working with the state legislature to designate the monarch butterfly as the Wisconsin state butterfly?

Fur Harvest Committee

27. Change opening time of muskrat trapping on opening day of muskrat season (220123, 330123, 540123, 680223)

Muskrat trapping can occur on any body of water in Wisconsin. However, rats are most concentrated on and trapping is therefore most focused on, large marshes and backwaters. On publicly owned properties, reaching the best sites before they are occupied is often very competitive.

Currently, trappers can tend traps any time of the day or night. As a result, trappers begin trapping at midnight on opening day. The rush for the best trap sites is competitive and the most competitive trappers are set out before daylight.

Some feel that this poses an undesirable disadvantage for young trappers. They feel that opening the season at 6:00AM on opening day would allow a fairer opportunity for trappers who prefer not to set out in the dark and especially for young trappers.

27. Do you favor changing the muskrat and mink season opening time to 6:00 AM on opening day for each zone on both private and public lands for uniformity and fairness to all trappers?

Environmental Committee

28. Include educational material on lead in all hunter education and fishing / hunting literature produced by the WI DNR (130623)

Lead ammunition and lead fishing tackle have been shown to pose environmental risks to wildlife and public health, and non-lead alternatives are increasingly available and effective.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has a duty to provide hunters with information on best practices for hunting and conservation. This resolution would require material produced by the Wisconsin DNR related to hunting and fishing to include information on non-lead alternatives and the impact that lead ammunition and fishing tackle have on our ecosystems and public health. Currently this information is only available online and is not included when purchasing a hunting or fishing license.

This information should include a description of the environmental and health risks posed by lead ammunition and fishing tackle. It would incorporate information provided by hunter education initiatives such as Sporting Lead-Free that offer information on alternatives to lead.

By providing this information and promoting non-lead alternatives, the Wisconsin DNR can help ensure that hunters and anglers in Wisconsin are informed and equipped to make responsible choices that promote conservation and protect our natural resources.

28. Do you support DNR including information on lead alternatives and the impact that lead ammunition and fishing tackle have on our ecosystems and public health in hunter education courses and hunting and fishing regulation materials?

29. Phase out lead in hunting with firearms by 2030 (130723)

Lead is superior for many things. Lead is also toxic for animals, some more than others. When used for pursuing game, at harvest the lead can end up in entrails and be scavenged by sensitive animals like eagles. It can also be fragmented into the meat, and possibly even find its way into food pantries through donations.

The use of lead shot is already restricted from use in waterfowl hunting and for all game on some properties, and some people already choose not to use lead for reasons including safety in consumption.

Other options are available, but they're more expensive especially because they're considered specialty items. Providing a timeline would allow supply chains and retailers to adapt and compete as demand normalizes.

29. Would you support eliminating lead, statewide, from firearm ammunition used for hunting by 2030?

30. The Eastern Bluebird and other grassland birds are declining at an unprecedented rate in Wisconsin (131223)

First identified by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) in their journal Science (volume 365, issue 6459) dated September 20, 2019, whereby it was verified that there has been a decline of 2.9 billion birds within North America since 1970. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's publication Living Bird dated Winter 2023 (Volume 42, Issue 1) reports that bird populations are continuing to decline nationwide. Notably, the grassland birds were declining the most by 53% over 50 years.

The Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin (BRAW), established by the Wisconsin Department Natural Resources (DNR) in 1986 to reestablish the population of the Eastern Bluebird and other cavity nesting birds (grassland species) in the State that showed significant decline since the mid 1960's. With the field work of hundreds of nesting monitors (Monitors are people who check on nesting boxes every 7-10 days during the nesting season which can last from April into September, but more commonly through July), statewide, BRAW end of season reports show a steady increase of fledged bluebirds to a total of 35,500+ in 2012. Since this time, there has been a significant drop in numbers fledged. The totals in 2022 was 13,683 fledged, almost a third less.

Causation has been documented to be attributed loss of habitat, environmental degradation including the use of pesticides and climate change. The latter cannot be practically addressed at this time, but the others can.

Though this significant decline can be attributed to more than one issues, most can be resolved with a concentrated effort across the state with an emphasis on education. Using the resources of the DNR publications and statewide network, posters at libraries, participation of the appropriate departments within our state university sites, seminars through 4-H and the Farm services, a continued effort to alert people of these issue (avoiding just a one-shot deal) may impact and help slow or correct the avian decline in our state, especially grassland birds.

30. Do you support DNR using their resources and working with the Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin to expand nesting box monitors and to help educate the public about the impact of pesticides on grassland bird populations?

31. “Keep Cats Indoors” education (180223)

Since the 1960’s North America’s wild birds have declined by one-third, or nearly 3 billion individuals. One of the greatest causes of unnatural mortality in wild birds is house cats thoughtlessly allowed to roam free outdoors. Cats let out-of-doors by people kill an estimated billion birds a year in the United States. A single house cat turned loose outside – even if declawed or belled – can kill several dozen wild birds in a year. A current practice called TNR (Trap-Neuter-Release) involves releasing trapped cats back into the wild after neutering them. The practice, while reducing cats’ ability to breed does nothing to reduce the significant predatory pressure on birds. Education about the impact of free-roaming cats could change the behaviors of pet owners and reduce bird mortality.

31. Do you support the DNR and other conservation groups creating an awareness campaign focused on the adverse impact outdoor cats have on Wisconsin's wild bird populations?

32. Wake boat ballast systems violate current Wisconsin regulations (640523) *(requires legislation)*

It has been known since the 1980’s that ballast water containing aquatic invasive species was discharged into the St. Lawrence Seaway from European ships. From there the invasives made their way into our Great Lakes and now into Wisconsin’s inland lakes. Current regulations state that all boat ballast systems must be completely emptied prior to being removed from the boat landing. Wake boat ballast systems are not designed to be completely emptied. Many of the boat ballast systems are inaccessible and totally enclosed. This makes the systems impossible to inspect and unable to dry because they are enclosed.

It is evident that manufacturers are aware that ballast systems don't drain completely. Wake boat owners’ manuals say to add several gallons of antifreeze to the ballast system in winter to avoid problems from residual water freezing. A University of Wisconsin study has shown that wake boat ballast systems contain on average 8 gallons of residual lake water after “being emptied”. In some boats as much as 20 gallons remained. The water tested contained zooplankton and, in some cases, it was still alive. When these boats are moved from lake to lake, they transfer the ballast water and its contents from one lake to another lake.

Wake boat ballast systems cannot be completely emptied. Therefore, they can transfer aquatic invasive species such as zebra mussels, spiny water fleas and fish diseases from one lake to another. Wake boats could be used on lakes and rivers for activities such as water skiing, tubing and pleasure cruising but use of the ballast system feature should be prohibited.

32. Would you support the WCC and legislature creating a new statute that prohibits the use of wake boat ballast systems on Wisconsin's lakes and rivers?

33. Protective limitations on PFAS compounds (660223)

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a class of over 4,000 "forever chemicals." PFAS substances continually accumulate in the human body in never decreasing amounts. 98% of Americans have measurable levels of PFAS in their blood.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), certain PFAS pose risks to human health, including developmental problems in fetuses and infants, certain types of cancer, reduced antibody response, decreased immune response to vaccinations, and kidney disease.

People accumulate PFAs from a wide variety of consumer products, water repellants, non-stick pans, stain resistant materials, cosmetics, fire-fighting foams, fast food wrappers and paper production and biosolids or wastewater sludge applied to farm fields as a substitute for fertilizer.

Eating fish and game can also be a major contributor to PFAS accumulation in our bodies. PFAS contaminate fish across the U.S., with higher levels in the Great Lakes. In fact, A group of scientists, the Environmental Working Group, found the median amounts of PFAS in freshwater fish were an astounding 280 times greater than PFAS detected in some commercially caught and sold fish. In Michigan, smelt consumption from Lake Superior has been restricted to a suggested 8 oz portion per month for adults.

33. Should the Legislature, the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Health develop and enact protective limitations on PFAS compounds for acute and chronic toxicity in surface water, wildlife health, groundwater, fish consumption, and human health?

34. Prohibit the Use of the aquatic herbicide 2,4D in all aquatic Ecosystems in the state of Wisconsin

2,4D has been used in an unsuccessful attempt to eliminate nonnative aquatic plants in Wisconsin aquatic ecosystems for decades. This has been an expensive and in general unsuccessful endeavor. A recently completed seven-year study in Ellwood Lake, Florence County Wisconsin has documented the detrimental effect on the plant and animal communities of the lake. Extensive research has documented shifts in adult reproductive capabilities, egg quality degradation, larval mortality and reduced egg hatching percentages of many fish species at various concentrations and formulations of 2,4-D. Complete elimination of crappie and pumpkinseed populations were recorded in Ellwood Lake. Significant decrease in total zooplankton populations and zooplankton community changes have been documented. Zooplankton, being the primary food source for larval and prolarval fish of many species are of utmost importance for successful fish communities.

Total elimination of non-native vegetation using approved concentrations and types of 2,4-D has never occurred. Rhizomes and accumulated seeds are not killed by exposure to 2,4-D resulting in reestablishment of undesirable populations post treatment. Hybridization and herbicide tolerance in non-native species is well documented when subjected to long term exposure.

Native plant species express the entire gamut of response from complete elimination to intolerance.

34. Do you support the elimination of the use of herbicide, 2,4D in aquatic ecosystems in the state of Wisconsin?

Great Lakes Committee

35. Hook and line fishing modification to enhance motor troll fishing on Lake Michigan and Superior (680323)

Currently, Wisconsin sport fishing regulations governing fishing on Lake Michigan and Superior are not written in terms of the number of poles/rods/lines. It reads, "No person may do any of the following ... fish with more than three (3) hooks, baits or lures." As a result, the maximum number of poles/rods/lines is three (3) as long

as you have only one (1) bait on each pole/rod/line. More than one bait per line will require you to use fewer than three (3) poles/rods/lines.

The state of Michigan sport fishing regulations governing fishing on Lake Michigan and Superior are written in terms of the number of lines/hooks/lures. It reads, "No more than 3 lines per person (including tip-ups) or more than 6 hooks or lures may be used. All hooks attached to an artificial bait or "night crawler harness" are counted as 1 hook." The state of Illinois sport fishing regulations governing fishing on Lake Michigan are written in terms of the number of lines/hooks/lures. It reads, "TROLLING. Trolling is permissible, provided the angler has not more than three poles and lines with not more than two hooks or lures on each, except in waters where there is a 2 pole and line only designation." As a result, the maximum number of lines is three (3) per person and you can have a maximum of two (2) hooks or lures on each line.

As a result, Michigan and Illinois anglers are able to fish with a maximum of six hooks or lures, while Wisconsin anglers are limited to three.

In order to provide equitable fishing opportunities for Wisconsin anglers on Lake Michigan and Lake Superior as their counterparts in neighboring states, we propose the Wisconsin sport fishing regulations be modified to mirror the Michigan fishing regulations on Lake Michigan and Lake Superior and the Illinois fishing regulations on Lake Michigan.

35. Would you support the Conservation Congress working with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to allow the use of no more than 3 lines per person or more than 6 hooks or lures may be used when motor troll fishing on Lake Michigan and Superior?

Mississippi River Committee

36. Guide safety (420223)

In light of discussions and incidents at many popular ice fishing locations along the Mississippi River, the laws governing the conduct of guides need to be scrutinized and changed. In many cases guides bring multiple groups of clients out on the ice utilizing multiple trips of the transportation vehicle. During this time, the clients are without the safety of a safe trip off the ice, should conditions deteriorate. Once a full roster of clients is brought out on the ice utilizing multiple trips, the transportation mechanism is no longer able to accommodate removal of all the clients now on the ice in one trip. In the case of rapidly deteriorating ice conditions, a medical emergency, or timely transport from the fishing location, safe transportation is no longer available to these clients, leaving them in possible danger. To make sure that guides are properly caring for the safety and well-being of their clients, the vehicle should remain available to all clients for such emergency situations at all times and be able to transport all the clients in one trip.

36. Would you support the WCC working with the DNR and the Natural Resources Board to require that fishing guides on the Mississippi River keep their mode of transportation with the fisherman clients at all times to be available in cases of emergency?

37. Restore legal railroad crossing to access state lands and waters.

In 2005, Act 179 caused a change to statutes regulating railroads (SS 192.32) making it illegal for citizens to cross railroad tracks to access state lands and waters. Before this, citizens crossed these tracks legally and safely for more than 100 years. This has left more than 121 state properties and many other federal lands, mostly inaccessible. Many conservation groups have worked tirelessly with the DNR and legislators to change this restrictive law.

In 2014 the governor vetoed a budget proposal that would have restored legal crossings. In 2015, citizens, outdoor users, communities, and conservation groups began a concerted campaign to influence legislators to change the law restricting crossing of railroad tracks. The Wisconsin Conservation Congress has worked with many legislators, NRB Board, and citizens to make a concerted effort to change this law.

In 2016, several Wisconsin Legislators worked with the public and held meetings and received near unanimous support to restore safe railroad right of way crossings. In May of 2016, the Wisconsin Conservation Congress body voted on a resolution to restore access. This resolution passed unanimously.

In 2016, The Conservation Congress, Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, Safari Club Int., La Crosse County Conservation Alliance, and many other groups presented a petition to Wisconsin Legislators with 5000 signatures supporting restoration of legal railroad crossings.

In 2016, Wisconsin Legislators introduced bills to the Assembly (AB 879) and Senate (SB 734). AB 879 was approved by the State Assembly, but SB 734 was stalled in the Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Committee with no rationale provided.

In 2022, the Mississippi River Advisory Committee (MRAC) researched railroad incident reports and found no incidences of accidents/incidents involving citizens crossing railroad right of ways for the purpose of accessing public lands and waters.

In 2022, the MRAC made attempts to contact the Railroad Administration and associated State Legislators to seek clarification of accident report statistics and failed attempts at 2016 legislative change attempts - no response was received from either.

Since 2016, this issue has been talked about in many communities, groups, and recently in the WCC Mississippi River Advisory Committee.

37. Would you support the Wisconsin Conservation Congress assertively working with Wisconsin State Legislators to reinstate SS 192.32 (1) (c) which allows the public to safely and legally walk directly across railroad tracks/right of way for purposes of accessing state lands and waters?

Trout Committee

38. Protect brook trout population on Sixmile Branch in Grant County, southern Wisconsin (130923)

Brook trout populations in southern Wisconsin have been declining for decades, due to environmental degradation, and the fact that brown trout can tolerate slightly warmer temperatures and are more capable of resisting predation. Many southern Wisconsin streams contained mostly brook trout in past decades, but brown trout have outcompeted them and taken over most of these streams. The DNR has established special

regulations to protect the surviving brook trout population on many creeks, for example Plum Creek in Crawford Co, Harkers Creek, Big Spring Branch and Pompey Pillar Creek in Iowa Co. Sixmile Branch in Grant Co has been the site of extensive habitat improvement work performed by the Harry and Laura Nohr chapter of Trout Unlimited and supported by the DNR and various conservation groups. This stream has a surprising population of naturally reproducing brook trout, and it also supports a healthy population of brown trout. The browns live longer and grow to larger sizes, and larger brown trout routinely feed on small trout. Establishment of special regulations on this stream will reduce angler harvest of the wild brook trout and increase harvest of brown trout as it has done on other streams in southern Wisconsin. This needs to be done before the current wild brook trout population is significantly reduced with the surviving brook trout forced into the stream's headwaters.

38. Would you support establishing special regulations for trout fishing on Sixmile Branch in Grant County, above Pine Tree Road, to specify a daily bag limit of 5 trout in total, all brook trout caught must be immediately released; brown trout and rainbow trout no minimum length; gear restriction that only artificial lures may be used?

Land Use Committee

39. Urging powerline companies not to mow low native vegetation in summer (050423, 110423, 120323, 131323, 220423, 410623, 460323, 630323)

Cooperatives and companies that operate electric powerlines throughout Wisconsin are mowing low ground vegetation under powerlines during nesting season destroying valuable wildlife habitat. Power companies need to eliminate tall trees growing under powerlines so that the trees do not impact the electrical transmission lines. Some power companies use large mowers to completely mow all ground vegetation, including milkweed, hazel, dogwood, and native prairie species. Milkweed is the one basic plant that is required by monarch butterflies, which is considered "endangered" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service states that the monarch is "a candidate for listing." Monarchs lay their eggs on milkweed plants, which are the only foods that the Monarch caterpillars eat once the egg hatches". Mowing in mid-summer not only destroys the plant but any eggs that are left on the leaves by adult monarchs. In addition, this vegetation is often native vegetation, that nobody planted under the powerlines, shrubs provide nesting habitat for late nesting songbirds, wild turkeys, and shade for amphibians. In Wisconsin powerlines traverse the entire state. Dairyland Power Coop says it has 3,200 miles of powerlines, ground that can be disturbed, and monarch habitat mowed down in prime breeding season.

39. Would you support that the Wisconsin Conservation Congress advising the Department of Natural Resources Natural Heritage Conservation Bureau to request powerline companies refrain from mowing during the summer months and encourage powerline companies to work with private landowners to manage powerline vegetation that provides habitat for insects and wildlife?

40. Open the Hoffman Hills State Recreation Area (Dunn County) to all legal hunting seasons (170123)

Currently, the 715-acre Hoffman Hills State Recreation Area is only open for hunting during the nine-day November gun deer season as designated in the restrictions of the deed for the original parcel of land that was donated. Subsequent parcels of land were later donated that have no deeded hunting restrictions. Opening up

those parcels to all legal hunting seasons would provide roughly 400 acres of additional public hunting access to our citizens. Doing so would also fall in line with how hunting access is handled at the majority (7 out of 8) of other recreation areas that are located in other parts of the state. The state real estate office confirmed that this is an achievable change based on the parcel deeds for the recreation area.

40. Would you support the parcels of the Hoffman Hills State Recreation Area with no deeded hunting restrictions being opened to all legal hunting seasons?

Motorized Recreation Committee

41. Requiring registration for any motorized vehicle on public frozen waterways (350523)

Currently, statewide, there are very few laws specifically written for frozen waterways in the state of Wisconsin, limiting law enforcement's ability to enforce motor vehicle laws equitably among frozen waterway users. Further, motor vehicles (as defined by state statutes) traveling on or participating in racing events (sanctioned or unsanctioned) on public frozen waterways are not required to have a current valid registration. To be fair, all motorized vehicle users should be required to contribute equally for the privilege of using the State's natural resources. In addition, motorized vehicles do not require waterways for use, as do boats, for example. State statutes or legislation would likely be needed so that law enforcement could address the concern.

41. Would you support a requirement that any motorized vehicle (as defined by state statutes), traveling on or participating in any type of sanctioned or unsanctioned racing event on public frozen waterways display a valid Wisconsin or nonresident vehicle registration?

42. Ballast system inspection requirement (130223)

Ballast systems are used in some boats to artificially enhance wakes. These systems can contain hundreds of gallons of lake water. NR 19.055(1) requires all ballast systems to be emptied of water immediately upon leaving the waterbody. The failure to totally empty water from ballast systems risks the spread of invasive species to other waterbodies as for most ballasted boats, it is impossible to fully empty the water after removal of the boats from the waterbody, leaving an average of 8 gallons of water and as much as 20 gallons of water that cannot be purged. There is currently no reasonable way to inspect ballast systems on many boats upon removal of the boat from the waterbody. WDNR personnel have stated that it is impossible to enforce the regulation regarding emptying ballast systems upon leaving the body of water because of an inability to inspect water ballast tanks. The boat owner should follow manufacturers' instructions to make the system visible and permit any WDNR employee, municipal official, and any State authorized Clean Boats / Clean Waters person monitoring boat landings to inspect the ballast system and forbid any person from launching or removing a boat that contains water in a ballast system. Any ballast system that has no practical means for inspecting shall be presumed to contain residual water and shall be forbidden to launch.

42. Would you support regulations by DNR to require that all ballast systems used in boats shall have a reasonable practical means of inspecting the system to confirm that no water is retained in the system (tanks, piping, valves, etc.)?

43. Regulation of wake surfing boats is necessary to protect our lakes, personal property and safety of everyone else using the lake (640423) (requires legislation)

Recently, the sport of wake surfing has been rapidly increasing on our Wisconsin lakes. Wake surfing is when you surf without a tow rope directly behind a specially equipped boat that can generate a large ocean like powerful wake. The boat operates at about 10 mph plowing through the water, never reaching on plane position. The bow is up, and stern is down causing forward visibility problems. The propeller is angled downward about 40 degrees below horizontal which causes propeller wash to scour the bottom at least 20 feet deep. Wake surfing requires the generation of an intentionally magnified wake through the use of ballast, design features or operational procedures to amplify the wake's height and consequently generate large dangerous waves. The problem is these intentionally magnified wakes create a safety hazard to everyone else using the lake, they damage the environment, destroy personal property and erode the shoreline. This unregulated activity, wake surfing, can cause the following problems: churning lakebed with downward prop wash, creating murky water called turbid water, destroying water plants, destroying fish spawning beds, fertilizing algae blooms, swamping loon nests, eroding shoreline, jetting prop wash into the thermocline, transferring invasives via residual ballast water, endangering others through bad forward visibility, endangering others through generation of hazardous wakes, making the lake unusable by many others, and degradation of lakes will damage the local economy

43. Would you support the WCC and legislature modifying existing statutes to prohibit generation of intentionally magnified wakes for wake surfing through the use of ballast, design features, operational procedures or any other means on lakes smaller than 1500 acres and less than 20 feet deep and maintain a distance from shore and other lake users of 700 feet?

Deer & Elk Committee

44. Group bagging of antlerless deer in farmland zones (690223) (requires legislation)

Currently it is illegal to kill game for another person except during the firearm deer season (group bagging). This resolution proposes the removal of the restriction for bows and crossbows for antlerless deer in farmland zones where deer populations objectives are to decrease or maintain the herd. Junior antlerless deer harvest authorizations issued to those age 17 and under would continue to only be filled by the person to whom the authorization is issued. All other restrictions and rules for group bagging would need to be followed.

44. Do you favor removing the restriction of group hunting for antlerless deer with bows and /or crossbows in farmland zones?

45. Give the option of an archery tag or gun tag with purchase of sports license (110123) (may require legislation)

Currently, when purchasing a sport license you get a small game, fishing and gun deer license. This proposed resolution is to give hunters the option of choosing an archery, crossbow or gun deer license.

45. Would you support allowing hunters to choose either an archery, crossbow or gun deer tag when purchasing a sport license (may require legislation)?

46. Expanded opportunity for deer hunters with disabilities (420123)

Currently eligible disabled hunters participating in the October Disabled Deer Hunt program cannot hunt on their own property or lands they have access to without that property being enrolled as a sponsor, which requires a minimum acreage and being open to other disabled hunters. Modifying the disabled hunt to waive these requirements during the weekend that it coincides with the statewide youth deer hunt when high visibility clothing is required statewide would allow disabled hunters to hunt without meeting these requirements that apply to the remainder of the disabled hunt program.

46. Would you support a modification of the land requirements of the October disabled deer hunt during the weekend that it coincides to the statewide youth deer hunt?

Outdoor Heritage & Education

47. Senior Patron License (720423) (requires legislation)

Currently senior citizens in Wisconsin receive a fishing license for \$13 less than regular, a small game license for \$9 less and a state park sticker for \$15 less. That is a total of \$37 less for seniors. However, no reduction is given if purchasing a patrons license. Seniors, because of their age and physical limits, are far less likely to pursue game as aggressively as when they were younger. Most just like to get out a few times for the social aspects and not the harvest of game. Based on the number of licenses sold during the 2023-24 license year, this would be an annual revenue loss of about \$441,200.

47. Would you support the Conservation Congress working with the DNR and the Legislature to reduce the cost of a Senior Patron License to \$130 from the current \$165, for seniors to receive a discount based on their age as the other cited licenses do?

48. Ban shining of wild animals from Sept 15th to December 31st (690322) (May Require Legislation)

Currently DNR regulations allow the shining of wild animals from January 1st to September 14 with no time restrictions. After September 15th thru December 31st there is a prohibition of shining from 10:00 pm until 7am. This time frame covers most of the deer hunting seasons. Some hunters, conservation groups, landowners, and law enforcement officers have seen this rule to be abused by poachers, upsetting to landowners whose homes, property and livestock are being shined. Some counties have already placed bans on shining wildlife like Buffalo Co. and Pepin Co. with positive results. Other counties such as Ozaukee Co. Barron Co. and Eau Claire Co. are also considering placing bans on wildlife shining.

Excluded from this rule would be, night hunting of unprotected species (as well as coyote, fox and raccoon) could be hunted without shooting hour restrictions except if hunting with bow or crossbow. The use of a flashlight or firearm-mounted light could be used at the point of kill while hunting on foot for coyote, raccoon, fox, or unprotected species.

48. Do you support a ban on the shining of wildlife in the state of Wisconsin from Sept 15th thru December 31st?

WCC District Leadership Council

49. Commercial harvest of lake trout in Lake Michigan

Commercial fishing for lake trout in Wisconsin Waters of Lake Michigan dates to at least the late 1880's. Commercial fishers enjoyed a stable fishery until 1945, after 1945 there was a substantial decline in harvest and commercial fishing in Wisconsin waters of Lake Michigan.

Sport fishing for lake trout remains a vital component of the salmon and trout fishery of Lake Michigan. The sport fish regulation for lake trout between 1995 and 2016 was two fish per day with a season that ran from March 1 to October 31. Since 2017, the sport fish regulation has been five fish per day with no closed season. The average annual harvest from 1969 – 2021 was 49,227 lake trout. The current ten-year average sport harvest of lake trout is 28,859 fish. A new total allowable catch number of 48,443 lake trout was developed using a population model, in conjunction with 4 stakeholder meetings in 2023. An updated lake trout forecasting model is in the final stages of development and will allow a better understanding of the impacts of various management actions.

The lake trout population collapse has been attributed to a combination of factors with the invasion of the non-native sea lamprey being the leading cause. Efforts across the US and Canada have been undertaken since the early 1960's to rehabilitate lake trout in Lake Michigan. Rehabilitation efforts are ongoing and the goal of a self-sustaining population in Lake Michigan has remained elusive. However, several of the key metrics for assessing rehabilitation efforts are trending in a positive direction.

There are two main activities actively being implemented in Lake Michigan for lake trout rehabilitation efforts, these are sea lamprey control and lake trout stocking programs. Currently, Lake Michigan is being stocked with 2.25 million lake trout annually across the entire lake including all bordering states and provinces. In 2022, 45,000 lake trout were stocked in Wisconsin waters. Prior to 2016 over 300,000 lake trout were stocked annually in Wisconsin waters of Lake Michigan. The decrease in lake trout stocking in Wisconsin waters began in 2016 to accommodate an increase in stocking of chinook, coho and steelhead. These stocking level changes were derived from a series of stakeholder input meetings during 2016-2017 to meet/address sport fisher interests.

In September of 2022, the DNR received a formal request from the Lake Michigan Commercial Fishing Board to pursue a scope statement to engage in the rule making process of establishing a commercial fishery for lake trout in Wisconsin waters of Lake Michigan.

49. Would you support a commercial fishery for lake trout in Wisconsin waters of Lake Michigan?
