

**DNR'S DISABILITY ADVISORY COUNCIL
COUNCIL PURPOSE/MISSION**

To advise the Department of Natural Resources on matters pertaining to the accessibility of all department programs and services by persons with disabilities.

- To draft recommendations to the Department for legislation, administrative rules, or department policy.
- To identify and evaluate needs of persons with disabilities and to communicate them to the Department.
- To help to increase public awareness and sensitivity to the needs of persons with
- To communicate with individuals and other organizations dedicated to similar purposes.

**MEETING MINUTES
DISABILITY ADVISORY COUNCIL
Tuesday June 17, 2025
Sandhill Wildlife Area, 1715 County Hwy X, Babcock, WI
OR virtually via Microsoft Teams or call-in.**

Members Present in-person: John Martinson, Calvin Richtig, Keith Pamperin, Kirsten Engel, John (Jack) Heim, Amy Carlson, and Lindsay Muench.

Members Present online/virtually: John Mitchell, and John Fritz.

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Nick Zouski, Shannon Holt, Brett Daul, and James Chitek from the DNR.

Guest presenters: None

MOTIONS

NONE.

ACTION ITEMS

- A. Nick to send list of Accessible Cabin Reservation System Goals to Shannon and DAC members.
- B. Cabin sub-committee to provide feedback for Accessible Cabin Reservation System Goals in 1-2 weeks.
- C. Shannon to mail reappointment letter to John Mitchell.
- D. Members to review bylaws.
- E. Calvin to create a spreadsheet database for other states programs
- F. Nick to ask ECM to consider different surfaces to indicate to a blind person when they're in front of the door, like at a crosswalk.
- G. Nick working on updates to PDMD permits and wording concerning companions.

MEETING MINUTES

Chair Richtig called the meeting to order at 10:13 am.

Next the Council reviewed the agenda.

Jack made a motion to approve the amended agenda. Keith seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

The Council next reviewed the meeting minutes from March 14th, 2025.

Keith made a motion to approve the minutes. Jack seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

Introductions and Member Updates

Keith Pamperin – From Green Bay area. Very involved with Challenge Outdoors. Serves on the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation. Keith is currently vice-chair and has served on the DAC as a long-time member.

Calvin Richtig - From Green Bay Area, works for Options for Independent Living. Calvin is currently the Chairperson of the DAC and has served for approximately five years. He also serves on the Assistive Technology Advisory Council.

James Chitek – WI DNR Customer Service and Outreach Supervisor.

Lindsay Muench – One year anniversary on the DAC. She is very interested in the outdoors (hunting and fishing) and is a hunting safety instructor. Lindsay is also involved with Adaptive Sportsman and participates on a competitive wheelchair soccer team on a national level.

Jack Hiem – primary outdoor involvement is with adaptive climbing. Wisconsin Adaptive Climbing trip to Devil's Lake is June 27th, 2025.

John Martinson – Previous Chairman and has served on the DAC since 2010. Vice Chair of Adaptive Sportsmen. John has also been advocating for spinal cord research. SB99 is currently going through the Senate; the bill is about targeting functional recovery for spinal cord injury and finding a permanent solution. Assembly Bill #92. John enjoys scuba diving and riding his motorcycle as well as hunting.

Amy Carlson – Amy is an advocate for Parkinson's Disease and has been participating in a successful clinical trial. Keeping busy and moving is good medicine, but getting out in nature is the best medicine (for brain stimulation). She is involved in the Davis Phinney Foundation which is a Live Well with Parkinson's nonprofit organization. Amy was recently featured at Lawrence, KS campus of the University of Kansas, as a MOTH storyteller.

Nick Zouski – Accessibility Coordinator for the DNR.

Brett Daul – Capital Development and Accessibility Supervisor for the DNR.

Kirsten Engel – Executive Director at the Autism Society. Has served on the DAC since approximately 2010, previously worked at Independent Living Center doing ADA and assistive

tech consulting. Her son also participates on a competitive wheelchair soccer team on a national level.

Shannon Holt – DNR Facilities Management Office and DAC meeting Facilitator.

John Fritz – John has been with the DAC for three meetings now. John is a totally blind person who runs a vending company and greatly enjoys hunting. John is involved with helping landowners get sponsored for places for people with disabilities to go hunting and teaching hunting to persons of all abilities.

John Mitchell – John lives near Milwaukee in Greenfield. He has been very involved Adaptive Sportsman's over the years (events are on the website <https://adaptivesportsmen.org/>) and served on the Independence First board for 13 years.

Customer Service and Licensing Updates

Hunt/Fish Updates:

Fishing:

- Launched the New Wisconsin Fishing Finder interactive map.
 - [Wisconsin Fishing Finder | Fishing Wisconsin | Wisconsin DNR](#)

Turkey:

- Preliminary 2025 Spring Turkey Harvest is 49,479 birds which would be the 5th highest spring harvest.
- Slight dip from 2024 (50,734) which was the 4th highest harvest

Deer:

- New DMU Boundaries: [proposed-dmu-map](#)
 - Mentioned at the March meeting
 - Wildlife program will be using various communications (social media, press release, pocket guide, etc.) to assist hunters with this change.
- Gun Deer Hunt for Hunters with Disabilities
 - Season Dates: Oct. 4-12
 - Sponsor (Landowner) signup is open now through July 1st
 - Press release with information sent out on 5/29/25
 - Hunter signup will be open July 15th – September 15th
 - Please contact Brooke VanHandel, Assistant Deer and Elk Specialist, via email brooke.vanhandel@wisconsin.gov or by phone at (608) 354-3492 with questions.
- Antlerless quota to be established at the NRB meeting on June 24-25
 - June 30th tentative release date for customers to claim Farmland Antlerless Authorizations
 - Bonus Antlerless Authorizations will go on sale starting August 18th.

Elk:

- Application Deadline was May 31st and the drawing has been completed. Customer are being contacted by wildlife staff.
- 2025 Elk Quota - [Item-6.D.-2024-Elk-Season.pdf](#)
 - Clam Lake Zone – 8 Bulls (Subject to 50% declaration by Ceded Territory Tribes)
 - Black River Zone – 4 Bulls, 5 Antlerless

Furbearers:

- Application deadline for Bobcat and Fisher is August 1st

Legislative Updates:

- SB45/AB50 Budget Proposal
- No update since the March meeting
 - Section 497-600 – changes to statutory fee schedule for numerous hunting/fishing license approvals. Below are increases that could impact hunters/anglers with disabilities
 - Section 529 – Res. Senior Fishing License (+\$10)
 - Section 535 – Res. Disabled Fishing (+\$10)
 - Section 537 – Res. Disabled Veteran Fishing (+\$10)
 - Section 555 – Res. Purple Hear Conservation Patron (+\$10)
 - Section 557 – Res. Disabled Veteran Recreation Card (+\$10)
 - Section 562 – NR Purple Hear Conservation Patron (+\$10)
- SB2 – Relating to expanding veterans benefits to individuals who served in Laos in support of the United States during the Vietnam War
 - 1/24/25 – Read first time and referred to Committee on Natural Resources, Veteran and Military Affairs
 - 3/11/25 – Report passage of Committee, Ayes-4, Noes-1 – Available for Scheduling
 - 5/15/25 – passed in the Senate and referred to the Assembly
- SB19/AB18 – Relating to fee waivers for state park vehicle admission receipts to pupils with Every Kid Outdoors passes
 - 2/5/25 – Read first time and referred to Committee on Financial Institutions and Sporting Heritage
 - 2/6/25 – Red first time and referred to Committee on Forestry, Parks and Outdoor Recreation
 - No updates since March meeting
- SB49/AB16 – Relating to repealing an administrative rule of the DNR related to the possession of firearms
 - Read first time and referred to Committee on Environment
 - 4/22/25 – Referred to Senate committee on Administrative Rules
- SB112/AB117 – Relating to hunting of sandhill cranes, programs related to sandhill crane damage, providing an exemption from emergency rule procedures, granting rule-making authority, and making an appropriation.
 - 3/11/25 – Read first time and referred to Committee on Sporting Heritage
 - 4/29/25 – Fiscal estimate received – No other updates since March meeting
- SB265/AB267 – Relating to waiver of fees for admission to state parks on Earth Day
 - 5/20/25 – Read first time and referred to Committee on Financial Institutions Sporting Heritage

Other Updates:

- Wisconsin Conservation Congress Spring Hearings were held in-person on April 14, 2025, at 6pm in each county, and online starting on April 14, 2025 at 7pm through April 16, 2025 at 6pm
 - Results are now available for spring hearing questions

Budget

Wisconsin's 2025-27 state budget is currently being debated by the legislature. The Joint Finance Committee is in the process of disassembling the Governor's proposed budget and rebuilding it. The deadline for passing the budget is June 30, 2025.

Cabin Reservations/ Campsites

This project is being turned over/taken over by parks. Parks and Recreation Bureau Director, Steven Schmelzer, has a team working on this. The parks team is currently developing an email form for cabin reservations (available date for use TBD) and is also changing the reservation process to be ran centrally in coming years. They are also looking into the possibility and feasibility of adding cabin reservations to the CAMIS system. The parks team has developed a list of goals, and they would like this group's feedback and help prioritizing.

Accessible Cabin Reservation System Goals include:

- Prioritize access for those with the greatest need
- Promote equitable and rotational access
- Improve transparency of selection or allocation methods
- Support diverse accessibility needs
- Increase awareness of the accessible cabin program
- Streamline the application and booking process for users
- Enable real time notification of cancellations or openings
- Coordinate cabin and campsite reservation windows for group travel
- Reduce manual workload for park staff

Hunter Safety

R3- Recruit, Retain, and Reactivate program is launching an online program geared toward people with disabilities. This course would be an optional companion course that focuses on adaptive equipment and introducing the community to adaptive equipment. The DNR is looking for outside organizations to partner with that has access to adaptive equipment and would allow use of their equipment for training purposes. Adaptive Sportsman can help.

Lunch Break: 11:54am – 12:30pm

Accessibility Fund

Being launched soon by Natural Resources Foundation (NRF). Nick and Bret have final meeting next week. Once up and running, credit card donations will be accepted on their website; [Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin](#). NRF will take a 20% administration fee for their services. Funds will be used for general accessibility projects and equipment. Funds raised through donations may also be used to match grants from parks Friends' groups.

Bylaws

Calvin would like council members to review the bylaws as it has been probably 10 years since the last review. Members should review the purpose and role of the DAC and consider any changes or revisions that are to be made to the bylaws. This can be a long-term project/ goal of the council. Every state receives federal Assistive Technologies (AT) funding, yet Wisconsin is one of only three states that has a Disability Advisory Council. This led to discussion of how WI compares to other states.

Accessibility Programs of Other States

Calvin to start an Excel spreadsheet for other state programs to create a database for DNR websites and accessibility websites that other states offer. This will be a live document shared with the group that all can add to. It may be beneficial to compare what other states and to network with them to be able to share ideas back and forth. It does seem that Wisconsin is one of the leaders for state-run programs. We can also model accessibility features of national parks.

A sub-committee was formed to find what states would be good for Wisconsin to emulate. Sub-committee volunteers are Amy, Calvin, Kirsten, and Lindsay. Once good examples are found, Nick and Calvin will reach out for networking in the future. This item should be kept on the agenda moving forward.

Public Comments: Open 1:30 – 1:45pm – none

Accessibility Coordinator Updates

- Kayak Launches – New launches at Pike Lake and Yellowstone Lake State Parks. Design flaw noticed with the sliding plank and bolt placement, as well as the transfer bench being too high. Nick has contacted the manufacturer (Mod-U-Dock) about these issues. There have also been a few instances of the crossbar being installed incorrectly.
- Outdoor Wheelchair Program – Nick and Parks team (Deanna Sell) nominated for an award from the Governor's Office.
- Speaking Engagements – Nick is available for speaking engagements for groups. Calvin mentions that Farm Technology Days has been one of their most successful

shows for the statewide ADT program.

- Shower Modifications – Nick spoke with Engineering and Construction Management Section leader, and they will incorporate more hooks, including lower hooks for guide dogs on all future shower designs. Jack suggested the idea of having different/textures surfaces to indicate in front of the door.
- Reappointments – All reappointments are up to date. Moving forward, all reappointments will be done in December for the next 3 years, so terms will run longer than 36 months.
- State Fair – State Fair 2025 is from July 31st- August 10th in West Allis. Chad, Action Track Chair state rep. is working with Parks to allow the DNR to borrow a chair for display during the state fair. Parks has a booth that Nick can use for accessibility awareness. Nick is still working with/ waiting for communications on new brochures and printed materials.
- Hunting Blinds – Proposed rule change to allow hunters with disabilities to leave blinds up overnight on state-owned land did not make it to spring hearings this time around. Will be proposed next spring. Natural Resources Board (NRB) will discuss allowing ABC permit holder to participate statewide during the Youth Hunt.
- Montello Fishing – Barricade was put in pathway and blocking access to recently added universally accessible fishing pier. Therefore, wheelchair users are now blocked off from pier access. The village/city of Montello needs to be contacted to rectify this. This is not DNR property, but it is believed that DNR stewardship funds were used for the pier.

RightHear at Heritage Hill

Tentative launch date of July 22nd. Save the date, but not set in stone yet. Calvin will send out an invite when more is known, and system is up and running.

Adjourn

Amy moved to adjourn the meeting. Kirsten seconded. Motion passed.
Chair Richtig adjourned the meeting at 2:16 pm.

Property Tour

Sandhill Wildlife Area is nearly 10,000 acres, so most of the tour was by car/truck/van. We drove to the North pasture where the Bison heard was gathered. Property Supervisor, Zachary Knab, spoke to us about the property and the American Bison heard.