

# 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.

## DISABILITY ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES SUMMARY

**Thursday September 18, 2025**  
**Mirror Lake State Park, Fern Dell Road, Baraboo, WI**  
**OR virtually via Microsoft Teams or call-in.**

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

Members Present online/virtually: Keith Pamperin

Members Absent: John Mitchell and Amy Carlson

Others Present: Nick Zouski (online via MS Teams), Shannon Holt, and James Chitek from the DNR.

Guest presenters: Cyndi Hardesty - DNR, and Corrinna Regnier - DNR

---

### MOTIONS

**NONE.**

### ACTION ITEMS

- A. Review Purpose & Mission of DAC on next agenda, so this is better communicated to park and property staff for visits.
- B. Nick to work to make DAC Agenda an accessible document.

- C. Cyndi will talk with her supervisor about having some kind of mechanism in place on the website that the public can report non-accessible content and offer feedback.
- D. Lindsay is to continue to be the point of contact for Cabin Reservation System subcommittee.
- E. Cabin Furniture & Amenities Standards should include door openers.
- F. Nick to update list of hunting blinds.

## FULL MEETING MINUTES

Chair Richtig called the meeting to order at 10:12 am.

Next the Council reviewed the agenda.

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

The Council next reviewed the meeting minutes from June 17th, 2025.

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

### Customer Service and Licensing Updates

Hunt/Fish Updates:

Fishing:

- Lake Sturgeon Hook and Line season open now through Sept. 30<sup>th</sup> on select bodies of water.
- Sturgeon Spearing for Lake Winnebago – Deadline to purchase license is Oct. 31<sup>st</sup>.

Hunting:

- Fall hunting seasons are kicking off with many opening in September and October.

Deer:

- New DMU Boundaries: [proposed-dmu-map](#)
- Gun Deer Hunt for Hunters with Disabilities
  - Season Dates: Oct. 4-12
  - Hunter signup closed on September 15<sup>th</sup>
  - Please contact Brooke VanHandel, Assistant Deer and Elk Specialist, via email [brooke.vanhandel@wisconsin.gov](mailto:brooke.vanhandel@wisconsin.gov) or by phone at (608) 354-3492 with questions.
- Archery/Crossbow season started Sept. 13<sup>th</sup>.
- Gun season starts Nov. 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Hunting Disability Permit Application:

- Some minimal changes were made to the application to improve processing efficiency.

### Legislative Updates:

- SB45/AB50 Budget Proposal
- All proposed increases were removed from the final budget.
  - 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
  - No Update since June Meeting
- 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
  - 6/1/25 – Administrative Rule was repealed
- 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
  - No update since June meeting

### Other Updates:

- None

## **Budget**

Not much to update since last meeting. A lot of accessibility projects have been removed from the budget amid widespread cuts.

## **Devil's Lake Projects**

Devil's Lake State Park is one of the busiest and most popular parks in the state of Wisconsin, but due to its rugged landscape and geography it is one of the least accessible. The DNR is planning several large-scale projects to make the park more accessible. There are over 160 proposed projects for the property over the next decade. The top 27 proposed projects, all over 250 thousand dollars, all have accessibility components. Highlights include a universal kayak launch at the north shore (estimated 2026), West Bluff universal trail upgrade and overlook (pending budget approval), and a new welcome and interpretative center with classrooms (pending budget approval). East Bluff trail upgrades: The main component of the project is to pave about 500 feet of existing trail from the Service Road to a popular rock-climbing area that's used by mobility-impaired climbers. The adaptive climbing community approached the park and Friend's group asking for a wheelchair friendly trail to access the area that they routinely use for climbing outings for the adaptive climbing community. (project is funded by grant from Friend's group). The rescue road will remain closed to public vehicles and will continue to require a permit to drive a vehicle and park at this location.

## **Digital Accessibility Specialist: Cyndi Jaye**

The Wisconsin DNR has hired Cyndi to assist with compliance of the new Department of Justice (DOJ) rule that is effective April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2026. The new regulations require state and local governments to make their websites and mobile applications accessible following the web content accessibility guidelines. This includes ensuring that all digital content is readily accessible to users with disabilities such as those who rely on screen readers or other assistive technologies. Cyndi will be leading training for all DNR staff in upcoming months to ensure that all publicly available documents (MS word, Adobe Acrobat, etc.) are accessible. The 'forms team' is working on online forms that are currently fillable pdfs to convert them to web-based and away from pdf. Nick did request that a printable version does remain available because we sometimes get requests for them to be printed and mailed; for example: PDMD permits. Hunting and Fishing regulations will have large print format available on their website for download. Hard copy of large print will be available upon request only because it is over 300 pages. Campground reservations and fishing app will both undergo extensive updates by our third-party vendor to ensure compliance by DOJ deadline. Two specific DOJ guidelines are using a keyboard, and no keyboard traps such as the calendar when reserving a campsite. Each bureau will be responsible for updating their own websites and public facing documents. Lindsay requested a way to be able to report issues when found. Cyndi will talk with her supervisor about having some kind of mechanism in place on the website that the public can report content and offer feedback. Cyndi's email address is [cyndi.hardesty@wisconsin.gov](mailto:cyndi.hardesty@wisconsin.gov).

## **Lunch Break: 11:45am - 12:30pm**

## **Disabled Deer Hunt**

Beginning in 2026 the gun hunt for hunters with disabilities will start the same weekend as the youth hunt and will be statewide. Statewide hunting will only be available on the same days as the youth hunt. Additional days during the disabled deer season must be done on sponsored properties. In 2025 there are 95 sponsored properties available. Active permits that we have currently issued totals 5463 with 4100 of those being the Class A disabled permit and 101 being Class C. It is nearly impossible for the DNR to determine how many permit holders are active deer hunters because the hunting license is the same for all individuals. We do know that approximately 500 hunters annually participate in the special gun hunt for disabled hunters.

## **Right Hear: Calvin**

Due to ongoing issues with the beacons, this project has been delayed until 2026.

## **Cabin Reservations: Corrina**

Parks put out a request for proposals (RFP) for the campsite reservation system and digital accessibility is going to be utmost important as they are evaluating the proposals. Responses to the RFP are to include digital accessibility requirements across the board and it also requests a solution to our accessible cabin reservation system that we have now. Parks would like to get the group's input on the broader goals and importance of different aspects of what a reservation system would look like. The group prioritized nine goals:

### **A. Top Priorities**

- 1) Prioritize access for those with the greatest need
- 2) Promote equitable and rotational access
- 3) Support diverse accessibility needs

### **B. To resolve internally**

1. Coordinate cabin and campsite reservation windows for group travel (One issue is timing-being able to reserve cabin and campsites at same time. Second issue is regarding giving groups priority over individuals)

### **C. Should be resolved with better technology:**

1. Improve transparency of selection or allocation methods (Technology & Communications)
2. Increase awareness of the accessible cabin program (Technology & Communications)
3. Streamline the application and booking process for users (Technology)
4. Enable real time notification of cancellations or openings (Technology)
5. Reduce manual workload for park staff (Technology)

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

## Accessibility Coordinator Updates

- **Cabin Furniture** – What are the requirements if someone or a group wants to donate or purchase furniture? Currently very few standards exist other than there is a Hoyer lift and at least 2 hospital beds (one must be electric). Parks is working on a standard for the amenities and furniture in cabins. For example, do reclining chairs need to also be lift chairs.
- **Accessibility Fund** - Nick and Brett working through top level approvals and proposed website design.
- **Mead Outdoor Wheelchair Program** – Friends group recently purchased a Terrain Hopper and it is now available for public use with a reservation. In early September Parks had a universal recreation fair at Pike Lake unit in Kettle Moraine State Forest.
- **Shower Modifications** – Nick is working with Parks and Engineering to have more hooks with standardized locations integrated into the shower design. Also, we will be updating signage for bathroom and shower buildings.
- **State Fair** – Action Track Chair did let the DNR (Parks) borrow a chair to have onsite the duration of the fair. This has been an item of high interest and brings a lot of visibility and awareness of accessible recreational activities.
- **Hunting Blinds List** – John Mitchell had requested a list of hunting blinds on state properties, and that list was provided to the group. Nick will be updating the document.
- **All-terrain equipment** – The Trakchair is much more durable and holding up better than the Terrain Hoppers. Options for Independent living has had several problems with the Terrain Hopper in the short time that they have had it; and Nick also recommends Trakchairs for DNR properties.

## Member Updates

Calvin Richtig – Options for Independent Living is hosting a “Wheel Hike” event at Thunder Mountain Overlook (Marinette County Park) September 30<sup>th</sup> - October 5<sup>th</sup>

## Adjourn

Jack moved to adjourn the meeting. John Fritz seconded. Motion passed.  
Chair Richtig adjourned the meeting at 2:47 pm.

## Property Tour of Devil’s Lake State Park followed on Friday 9/19

Tour began at the North Shore near the concessions building. We saw the beach and the area where the universal kayak launch will be. Then we looked at one of the shower/toilet buildings in the Upper Ice Age Campground that is to be replaced. We then traveled to the parking area at Steinke Basin to see the rescue road that the climbing group uses. As a group, we were not able to go any farther than the parking area because the vehicle clearance required is more than an ADA van with a ramp has. The last stop was the South Shore and walked along the boardwalk.