

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 disabilities.
- To communicate with individuals and other organizations dedicated to similar purposes.

DISABILITY ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES SUMMARY

Friday December 5th, 2025
Virtually via Microsoft Teams or call-in.

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

Members Absent: None

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

Guest presenters: Jeff Rennicke from Friends of Apostle Islands

MOTIONS

NONE.

ACTION ITEMS

- A. Nick to reach out to Janet Hutchens for list of Friends Groups and contact information and ask to join future meeting to discuss how the DAC can work with Friends Groups.
- B. Invite Friends Groups to property tours.
- C. Nick to reach out to Wilderness Inquiry [Outdoor Adventure Trips | Wilderness Inquiry](#).
- D. Update contact details for Calvin on DAC website.

FULL MEETING MINUTES

Chair Richtig called the meeting to order at 10:04 am.

Next the Council reviewed the agenda.

Kirsten made a motion to approve the agenda. John Fritz seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

The Council next reviewed the meeting minutes from September 18th, 2025.

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

Customer Service and Licensing Updates

Hunt/Fish Updates:

Fishing:

- Sturgeon Spearing season opens 2/14/26 on Lake Winnebago and the upriver lakes

Bear:

- Preliminary 2025 Bear Harvest
 - 3,724 bears were harvested over the 35-day season. Placing it on par with the five-year average of about 3,800 bears annually. This season was below the harvest target of 4,075 bears. Zone A had the highest hunter success rate at 69% and had the most bears harvested at 1,161 bears.
- 2026 Bear Application deadline is December 10th

Deer:

- Preliminary Harvest Report for 9-day gun deer season
 - Overall harvest down 0.8% vs 2024 with 182,084 total deer harvested
 - [9-DayGunSeasonComparison.pdf](#)
- Muzzleloader season is open through December 10th (also gun deer in metro sub-units)

- Statewide Antlerless-Only hunt runs 12/11/25-12/14/25
- Antlerless-Only Holiday Hunt runs 12/24/25-1/1/26 (select Farmland Zone counties only)
- Archery/Crossbow season continues through 1/4/26 statewide (select Farmland Zone counties and all metro sub-units through 1/31/26)
- Disabled Hunter Permits Issued
 - Customer Service issued 167 Disabled Hunter Permits from 11/1-11/21 with 70 of those issued the week before gun deer opener.
- Fun Facts:
 - Sold over 100K gun deer licenses on Orange Friday, accounting for 18% of all gun deer license purchases for the year
 - Deer license purchases – Oldest Male=101 years old; Oldest Female=98 years old
 - Sold over 20K New Buyer licenses for gun deer – 26% being female new buyers
 - Oldest New Buyer was 93 years old.
 - Sold licenses to residents of all 50 states plus DC and Puerto Rico – plus 27 other countries.

Turkey:

- Spring Turkey Application deadline is December 10th.
- Fall Turkey season runs through January 4th (Zones 1-5)

Other:

- Holiday Pheasant Stocking – 3000 pheasants will be stocked on 25 properties across central and southern Wisconsin. Pheasant season runs through January 4th
- Various other Game Birds, Migratory Birds, Small Game, and Furbearer seasons are still ongoing.

Legislative Updates:

- 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
 - 5/6/25 – Public Hearing Held
 - 9/2/25 - Referred to Assembly committee on Rules

- No Updates since September Meeting
- 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
 - 11/19/25 – Public hearing held
- 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
 - 7/17/25 – Fiscal estimate received
 - 8/26/25 – Public hearing held
 - No Update since September Meeting
- SB339/AB327 – Relating to the weight limit for utility terrain vehicles (increase from 3000 to 3500 pounds)
 - 6/19/25 -Read first time and referred to Committee on Transportation and Local Government
 - 9/16/25 – Public hearing held
 - 10/14/25 – Read a third time and passed, referred to Assembly
 - 11/7/25 – Referred to Committee on Rules

Other Updates:

- Media coverage of a proposal that would require new fees for people looking to hike, cross-country ski, bike, canoe or forage on state-owned land. This is currently circulating for co-sponsors but has not been officially introduced yet. Proposed by state Rep. Chanz Green, R-Grand View, and state Sen. Rob Stafsholt, R-New Richmond.

Accessibility Fund – Nick (25:00)

Nick has gained DNR approval to work with the Natural Resources Foundation to create the fund. The website is set-up but not live and Nick is working to create brochures for awareness. Creating brochures brings up the subject again the use of the slogan, “Open the Outdoors”. This is the marketing slogan that is currently used by the DNR for accessible recreation. There is a concern that it is not obvious to everyone that this is where they should be looking for DNR accessibility components. Outside users who are looking for accessible opportunities may not recognize this term as the link to follow on the DNR websites. It is felt that recognizing the accessibility component is dependent on brand recognition. Members would like to see website links relabeled for easier navigation, especially for screen reader assistive technology.

Adult Changing Tables – Nick (42:29)

Nonprofit organization, Michelle’s Action Angels has offered to work with the DNR to purchase and install adult changing tables at locations in Door County. Through grant

money they have been able to install a table at Peninsula State Park and hope to provide adult changing tables at Potawatomi and Whitefish Dunes in the future. An issue that the DNR is running into is that the current (old) buildings are not equipped to be retrofitted for the equipment. In some cases, the changing space is too small to accommodate the table, and in other situations, the walls are not strong enough for mounting brackets (for models that fold down from wall). Also, due to the expense and complexity of moving parts/equipment, the DNR will focus on installing in building that are staffed. Moving forward, adult changing tables will be integrated in new building designs to ensure space and structural support.

Link to website: <https://www.michellesactionangels.org/>

Accessibility Coordinator Updates (1:03min)

- **Permits – Class A, B, C, D** - There's a lot of confusion about the different classes of permits and what rights and privileges are associated with each distinction and classification. These are some of the most frequently asked questions surrounding accessibility that Nick and customer service receive. There is currently no public facing materials such as pamphlets or documents that outline permit classifications. Nick is working to create a publicly facing document that will help address many of the questions people have concerning permits. James is also working on a spreadsheet table to lay out the rights and privileges of each class.

Friends Of Apostle Islands: Jeff Rennie (1:17min)

Jeff is the Executive Director for Friends of the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore (AINL), official philanthropic partner of the National Park Service. He shared a PowerPoint presentation with the group that Friends of the Apostle Islands did with the Big Top Chautauqua Band for Earth Day a couple of years ago. AINL includes 12 miles of coastline on the mainland and 21 islands in Lake Superior. It is a place that inspires dreams, but it's also a place that has some obstacles including a 45-step staircase to get to the waters edge at Myers Beach and a 72-step staircase to get to the top of Raspberry Lighthouse. In 2012 AINL undertook a self-assessment and found to summarize, *"Currently we are underserving important segments of the visitor population."* The National Park Service in general acknowledges this as well. AINL superintendent said, *"We have a lot of old infrastructure, and we have to go forward a little at a time to improve access. That's what we are doing as funding is available."*

Jeff went on to show some accessibility projects that have been done since 2008. Projects include building a privy on Basswood Island (built in 2008, but accessible pathway was not constructed and needs funding) and adding audio devices to the National Park Service Visitor Center (done in 2010). Stockton Island has had improvements made at Quarry Bay for accessible campsites (wooden deck with picnic table, fire ring and bear box) and an accessible wooden walkway (decking) where the curb for the walkway had to be added later. AINL currently has a project to build an accessible ramp down to Meyers Beach; this project will provide an alternative to the 45-step staircase and will be breaking ground in

2026. The friends group needed to fundraise half of the cost (\$325,000.00) and through national media coverage were able to raise more than \$470,000.00.

Main takeaway from Jeff: Build what the funding will allow even if it's not always exactly what you want the very first time you do it.

Partner organization for accessible outdoor recreation: [Wilderness Inquiry](#)

Save the date: Dark Sky Star Bright Festival January 17-25th 2026

Email: jeff@friendsoftheapostleislands.org

Lunch Break: 12:15pm – 12:45pm

Discussion of Apostle Islands Presentation

Jeff put a lot of emphasis on the idea to “build with what the funding will allow, even if sometimes it’s not what is ideal”. The idea is that it is better to have something that is less than perfect than nothing at all.

When the DAC does property tours, they would like to invite someone to represent the Friends Group for that property. This will raise awareness between the two groups. The DAC is interested in working more with Friends Groups to help them understand the importance of accessibility and prioritize projects. Lindsay has already been working on a list of Friends Groups.

The 2012 self-assessment done at AINL spurred many accessible projects into action. The DAC would like to see the DNR do more property assessments. Nick is working with programs to evaluate immediate needs and will be doing some assessments for Parks and Wildlife Areas.

Accessibility Coordinator Updates – Continued (47:30)

- **Action TrackChair-** The DNR is recommending the 30” wide model TrackChair with the lithium battery upgrade kit to Friends Groups to purchase. They have better adjustability for a variety of body types, a longer lasting battery, can fit through a regular doorway, and don’t need to be trailered. DNR employees may not trailer equipment without obtaining special training and certification; this creates a barrier to use.
- **Youth Deer Hunt-** Hunters with a Class, A, B, or C Disability Permit are allowed to hunt statewide (on public and private land) during the weekend of the Youth Hunt in 2026. High-viability clothing (blaze orange or pink) is required.

Public Comments – Open 1:30- 1:45

None

Active Accessibility Projects

All DNR projects are managed through a database, Development Projects System (DPS). This is an internal database to track projects from proposal through funding and execution. All projects that effect public use must be reviewed for accessibility (including projects that are funded by Friends Groups). Currently the only way to search for 'accessibility' projects in the system is if the word accessibility is in the project title. Therefore, Nick's search only yielded 13 results. However, there are thousands of projects in the system that will be reviewed for accessibility. Nick and IT are working to find a way for the software to be able to filter and export projects with an accessibility component.

Schedule 2026 DAC Meetings

- **Monday March 23rd** at Heritage Hill State Historical Park located at 2640 S Webster Ave, Green Bay, WI 54301
- **Wednesday June 24th** at Richard Bong State Recreational Area located at 26313 Burlington Rd, Kansasville, WI 53139.
- **Monday & Tuesday September 14-15th** at Kettle Moraine State Forest – Pike Lake Unit located at 3544 Kettle Moraine Rd, Hartford, WI 53027
- **Friday December 4th, 2026** – Virtual only.

All meetings begin at 10:00 am and are scheduled until approximately 3:00 pm.

Member Updates

Jack – Madison Lions Club got a \$20,000 grant from REI to support adaptive climbing in Wisconsin. Funds will be used to buy new equipment and possibly to provide transportation for climbing trip to Kentucky.

Keith- Options for Independent Living is having a sensory Santa on December 10th and 11th. Challenge the Outdoors is working on an accessible nature trail and 3D archery range. They are looking for design ideas for the 3D archery range. CTO had a successful deer hunt with approximately 50 participants and 15 deer harvested.

Calvin- Has a new job as an ATP with New Motion. He plans to remain on the council, but it is no longer one of his job duties as it was with Options for Independent Living.

John Mitchell- Adaptive Sportsmen – updates can be found on their website: [Adaptive Sportsmen Inc. providing outdoor recreational activities to physically challenged people](#)

Lindsay- At Adaptive Sportsmen Picnic was able to connect with individuals with disabilities who were interested in getting back into hunting and was able to assist with some adaptive hunting equipment.

Adjourn

Keith moved to adjourn the meeting. John Martinson seconded. Motion passed. Chair Richtig adjourned the meeting at 2:51 pm.