

DNR 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 people 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

Wednesday June 24th, 2026

**In person at Richard Bong State Recreation Area
in Kansasville, Wisconsin**

OR

Virtually via Microsoft Teams or call-in.

Members Present: John Martinson, John (Jack) Heim, John Fritz, Lindsay Muench, Amy Carlson, and Keith Pamperin.

Members Present Online: John Mitchell

Members Absent: Kirsten Engel and Calvin Richtig

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

Guest presenters: Don Tate – Tennessee Parks

MOTIONS

"The DAC encourages the DNR continue to analyze the pros and cons of approving the use of air bows for creating greater opportunities for persons with disabilities."

ACTION ITEMS

- A. Nick to contact Parks/ Corrina for Cabin Reservations update.
- B. James to get clarification on hunter sign-up for Disabled Hunt during Youth Hunt overlap October 10th & 11th.
- C. Nick to provide brochures for Parks staff to take to the State Fair. Also, obtain an electronic version that is accessible/ screen reader compatible.
- D. Nick to keep DAC members informed of Parks events with accessibility activities.

FULL MEETING MINUTES

Chair Muench called the meeting to order at 10:15 am.

Next the Council reviewed the agenda.

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

The Council reviewed the meeting minutes from March 23rd, 2026.

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

Customer Service and Licensing Updates – James Chitek

Hunt/Fish Updates:

Turkey:

- Preliminary 2026 Spring Turkey Harvest is 47,725 birds, which is 8.6% higher than the 5-year average (43,953)
- This spring marks 50 years since wild turkeys were successfully reintroduced to Wisconsin

Deer:

- Antlerless quota to be established by the NRB at their meeting on 6/24/26 (today)
 - Bonus Antlerless Harvest Authorizations will go on sale starting Monday, August 17th.
- Gun Deer Hunt for Hunters with Disabilities
 - Season Dates: October 3-11
 - Sponsor (Landowner) signup will be open May 1st – July 1st
 - Hunter signup period will be open July 15th – Sept. 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.

Elk:

- Application Deadline was May 31st, and the drawing has been completed.
- 2026 Elk Quota
 - Northern Elk Management Zone (fka Clam Lake Elk Range – 8 Bulls (Subject to 50% declaration by Ceded Territory Tribes)
 - Central Elk Management Zone (fka Black River Elk Range) – 6 Bulls, 6 Antlerless
- In 2026, there will be one continuous hunting season, opening Saturday, Oct. 17, and continuing through Sunday, Dec. 13, eliminating the split-season structure that was in effect from 2018-2025.

Furbearers:

- Application deadline for Bobcat and Fisher is August 1st

Upcoming Season Dates:

- Early Teal/Goose opens 9/1/26
- Bear opens on 9/9/26
- Fall Turkey opens 9/12/26
- Archery/crossbow Deer opens 9/12/26
- Cottontail Rabbit (Northern Zone) opens 9/12/26
- Squirrel opens 9/12/26
- Ruffed Grouse (Zone A) opens 9/12/26

Legislative Updates:

- SB331 now Act 114 – Relating to operation of ATV's/UTV's
 - Various changes related to headlights, brake lights, taillights requirements
 - In addition, there were Admin Code changes to NR 64 regarding seat belt usage, window tint, eye protection, towing of ATV's/UTV's, and a few other operational items.
- 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
 - 6/20/25 – Referred to committee on Rules
 - No Update since June 2025 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 2025 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
 - 2/19/26 – Read a third time and passed Assembly. Sent to senate.
 - 2/23/26 – Received from Assembly
 - 2/25/26 – Read first time and referred to Committee on Senate Organization; available for scheduling.
 - No Update since March 2026 Meeting
- AB682 – Relating to fees for nonresident hunting, trapping, and fishing approvals and nonresident vehicle admission receipts.
 - 11/26/25 – Read first time and referred to Committee on Sporting Heritage
 - 1/6/26 – Committee on Sporting Heritage hearing.
 - No Update since March 2026 Meeting
- SB700/AB704 – Relating to fees for Snowmobile Registration and trail use stickers (Registration +\$15, AWS Club Trail Pass +\$10, WI Res Trail Pass +\$20, NR Trail Pass +\$20)
 - 12/2/25 – Read for first time and referred to Committee on Transportation and Local Government
 - 1/6/26 – Senate Public Hearing held
 - 1/13/26 – Assembly Public Hearing held
 - 2/3/26 – Available for Scheduling (Senate)
 - 2/4/26 – Referred to Committee on Rules (Assembly)
 - No Update since March 2026 Meeting

Other Updates:

- Wisconsin Conservation Congress spring hearings were held in person on April 13th, 2026, in each county, and online April 13th-15th
- Results are now available [ANNUAL SPRING HEARING AND PUBLIC INPUT OPPORTUNITY | Wisconsin Conservation Congress | Wisconsin DNR](#)

Capital Development Budget Update – Brett Daul

The DNR is currently compiling project priorities by property and putting together a package to send to DOA at the end of September. Capital Development includes parking lots, toilet/shower buildings, picnic tables, and accessible paths of travel.

New Brochure – Nick Zouski

New Open The Outdoors print brochures are available. If any DAC members have events coming up, Nick can send you some brochures to hand out. Brochure information includes the following topics: Open the Outdoors (explains that this is the DNR's resource for recreation opportunities), Accessibility Fund, Hunting, Fishing, Accessible Campsites & Cabins, Adaptive Kayaks & Launches, Trails, Adaptive Equipment, Beach Access, and Disability Advisory Council.

Use of Air Bows - Nick

A DNR customer raised the question with Nick concerning the use of air bows. It is now legal for hunters to use crossbows. However, the use of a crossbow by a disabled person can frequently mean that they only have one single shot until a companion can come help them reload. The use of an air bow would allow many disabled people to have more than one shot. Nick would like the support of the DAC to request an exception to allow disabled hunters to use air bows during archery season. This may also apply to fishing with the use of an air bow.

MOTION:

Keith moves that, "The DAC encourages the DNR continue to analyze the pros and cons of approving the use of air bows for creating greater opportunities for persons with disabilities." John Martinson seconds the motion. All were in favor, motion passed.

Urban Fishing Ponds - Nick

This is old business from the DAC meeting in March 2026. It has been determined that the Urban Fishing Rules (State Statute) only apply from the second Saturday in March up to but not including the last Saturday of April. "The following urban waters have a continuous, year-round open season for all anglers, except for a special season." Therefore, the DAC does not find it necessary to pursue this issue to open more opportunities.

Accessibility Coordinator Updates – Nick Zouski

- Spring Hearings – During the DNR spring hearing the issue was brought up to allow disabled hunters to leave hunting blinds up overnight on public lands south of highway 64. This was approved in 71 of 72 counties (one county was a tie) so this is advancing.

- Digital Accessibility – The federal deadline has been delayed until April of 2027. Nick and Shannon have worked with DNR information technology services, and all issues identified on the Open the Outdoors website have been remedied. Overall, the DNR is still working on mobile content, apps, and mapping.
- Cabins- Nick has not had any recent updates from Corrina but will ask for one before the next DAC meeting.
- QR Code – Nick is working with the Office of Communications to create a QR code sticker that can be placed on our outdoor adaptive equipment. The QR code will take people to the Open the Outdoors website.
- Disability Permit Brochure – Nick is working with the Office of Communications to develop a brochure to explain the different permits and details of each type. We have an internal reference document and would like to have a public-facing document.

Lunch Break 12:00 – 12:45

Accessibility Coordinator Updates – continued

- Cabin Furniture – Nick is working with Parks to establish consistency and standards for cabin furnishings. Furniture standards are expected to be created and implemented over the next several years. Early discussions include types of beds, lifts, shower chairs and lift chairs. More information will come as this progresses.

Tennessee State Parks All Terrain Wheelchair Program – Don Tate

Don was the construction Director and ADA Coordinator for Tennessee State Parks. He is currently the Facilities Maintenance Chief for the Tennessee Department of Military, specifically the Army National Guard. During his time with Tennessee State Parks, he was able to spearhead their all-terrain wheelchair program. He has worked with several other states to help them build their all-terrain wheelchair programs. Tennessee has approximately 68 chairs in use and just purchased 20 more. Don was able to secure legislative funding (60 chairs funded at first request) and corporate sponsorships for outdoor wheelchairs. The state of Tennessee utilizes several models of outdoor wheelchairs, primarily the Extreme Motus, Grit Chair, Magic Mobility Extreme 8, and Trackmaster Series 2. Use of chairs is administrated by full-time park staff and regional coordinator & maintenance. Don also stressed the importance of trail mapping for accessibility. His new initiative is adding adult changing tables to park facilities.

Public Comments – Open 1:30-1:45pm

None.

Visually Impaired Accessibility – Nick

Nick is looking for recommendations on what technologies work well in remote areas that do not have cell coverage. He is looking for better and sustainable options. Right Hear has been piloted at Heritage Hill, however, it does require a yearly fee, Bluetooth has a limited range, and there have been other technology issues. Right Hear only provides an audio description of what the area looks like, and it is not integrated with GPS to tell the user where they are in relation to other park features. Jack knows of several GPS apps for the blind and is willing to help find better solutions. There are also tactile maps, and using those in conjunction with a GPS app will provide the best navigation available.

Hunter Safety for Disabled Hunters – Nick

Nick is working with Public Safety and Resource Protection (PSRP) trying to incorporate the topic of disabled hunters and adaptive equipment into the Hunter Safety curriculum. The hope is that by spreading knowledge of what is available and possible, participation in “Learn to Hunt” will increase. Nick and Lindsay will be working on this.

Member Updates

Keith – Challenge the Outdoors is having a fundraising banquet on September 24th. They are also hosing deer and pheasant hunting. More information can be found at [Challenge The Outdoors, Inc.](#)

John Martinson – John has been elected the new President of Adaptive Sportsmen. For information and events, please see <https://adaptivesportsmen.org/>

Jack – There is a new 501C in the area for taking people on adaptive sports outings. AMP Adaptive Sports <https://www.adaptivemobilityproviders.org/> Activities include water skiing, wakeboarding, kayaking, paddleboarding, fishing, rock climbing, camping, snowboarding, sit-skiing, and stand-up skiing. Based in Elkhorn, Wisconsin & Illinois. Also, Wisconsin Adaptive Climbing has a new harness system used for waist-down.

Property Overview of Richard Bong SRA – Emily Cole

Richard Bong State Recreation Area has over 4,500 acres with over 200 campsites. This land was inhabited by indigenous people for thousands of years. Some of the first English settlers were the Rhodes family. In the 1950's the government started buying surrounding land for a planned air base. In 1959 the air base was cancelled just before construction began. From 1959 to 1974 the land was vacant. In 1984 the state recreation area was established. Popular features include fishing pier, beach, ADA cabin, observation tower, observation platform with ramp, nature center, astronomy and aurora viewing, model rocket launching, hunting dog training and hiking along Rhodes Road (paved walking and biking trail).

Adjourn

Jack moved to adjourn the meeting. Amy seconded. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 2:50 pm.