

**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
Monday June 10, 2024
Held in person at Mirror Lake State Park, Baraboo, WI.
and virtually via Microsoft Teams or call-in.**

Members Present: John Martinson, Keith Pamperin, Calvin Richtig, John Mitchell, Kirsten Engel, John (Jack) Heim, Amy Carlson, and Lindsay Muench. No attendees on MS Teams.

Members Absent: Shannon Columb

Others Present: Nick Zouski, Shannon Holt, Barry Gilbeck, Terry Bay, and Steve Schmelzer.

Guest presenters: None

Chair Martinson called the meeting to order at 10:05 am.

Introductions: Everyone introduced themselves to the new members.

Next the Council reviewed the agenda. They wished to have three topics added: Special regulations for assisting disabled hunters, DAC membership update, and Amy's topic of how to interact with people who have not acknowledged the state of their own disability.

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

The Council next reviewed the meeting minutes from March 15th, 2024.

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

Potawatomi Tower Update – Terry Bay, Director of Facilities and Lands, and Steve Schmelzer, Director of Parks, came to talk to the group about the Potawatomi Tower restoration. This tower is approximately 80 years old and is degrading and unsafe for public use. The State of Wisconsin and Sturgeon Bay Historical Societies had this tower registered as a Historic Structure before the DNR could secure funding to raze tower and build a universally accessible tower similar to Eagle Tower at Peninsula State Park. The DNR proposed options to build a universally accessible ramp connecting to the original tower to allow for equitable access to all people. The tower is currently closed, and the Legislature only approved enough funding to stabilize the existing tower. There is not currently funding to build the proposed ramp.

MOTION: “The Disability Advisory Council advises the tower to remain closed until the renovations include accessibility in accordance with Americans with Disabilities Act.”
Amy made the motion. Calvin seconded the motion. Five members voted in favor of this motion, three opposed. Motion passed.

Customer Service and Licensing Updates

Elk

- New this year, the Black River Elk Range will be open to hunting for the first time since the elk were reintroduced to the state.
- The DNR/NRB approved an eight-bull harvest quota for the Clam Lake Elk Zone and a four-bull harvest for the inaugural season within the Black River Elk Zone. Per treaty rights, the Ojibwe tribes may declare up to half of the harvest quota within the Ceded Territory, which includes the Clam Lake Elk Zone.
- The drawing has been completed the Wildlife program is reaching out to the winners.

Bonus Antlerless Sales

- Will go on sale in August. Waiting for approval of permit levels by the Natural Resources Board.
- Check the website for dates and permit levels.

Recreational Vehicle Registrations

- Snowmobile postcard renewal notices for public registrations expiring 6/30/24 went to print Monday (6/3) and will be going out in the mail this weekend (about 73,000 of them). 2024-25 Wisconsin snowmobile trail passes are available for purchase from DNR. AWSC opens their discounted trail pass sales on July 1st.
- Boat registrations continue to come in at a rapid pace.

Fishing

- Reminder
 - o New regulations posted on the DNR website: [FishingRegsElectronic2425.pdf \(widen.net\)](#)
 - o New handout for regulations changes: [NewRegs20242025.pdf \(wisconsin.gov\)](#)
- Walleye regulation change to 3 fish statewide

Gun Hunt for Hunters with Disabilities

- Season Dates: Oct. 5-13, 2024
- Sponsor sign-up is now open through July 1, 2024
 - o Sponsor Application can be found on the DNR website:
 - [Deer hunting for hunters with disabilities || Wisconsin DNR](#)

- News release sent out.
- Facebook post in the queue.
- Radio station interview.
- The hunter sign-up period for 2024 will open on July 15. Sponsor contact information will be made available on the DNR Website for interested hunters to call and reserve locations directly with the landowner. Hunters should sign up by Sept. 15
- Please contact Brooke VanHandel, Assistant Deer and Elk Specialist, via email brooke.vanhandel@wisconsin.gov or by phone at (608) 354-3492 with questions.

Customer and Outreach Services Bureau Director Update

- Current Bureau Director, Kimberly Currie, is retiring on June 14.
- New Bureau Director, Alene Kleczek, will start on June 17.

Legislative Updates:

- Lifetime Fishing License Legislation Updates:
 - [23 AB 72](#) - 11/15/23 Public hearing held before the Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage & department provided testimony.
 - 4/15/24 Failed to pass pursuant to Senate Joint Resolution 1
- Disability Rating for Veterans
 - [23 SB 44/AB 71](#) – Disability rating for veterans to qualify for license authorizations, admissions fee exemptions.
 - 2023-03-14 [To Senate Financial Institutions and Sporting Heritage Committee](#)
 - 4/15/24 Failed to pass pursuant to Senate Joint Resolution 1
- The following were signed by the Governor and enacted into law
 - 23 SB 310/AB 306 State ID card
 - 23 SB 780/AB 799 Nonresident archer and crossbow hunting licenses fee increase
 - 23 SB 586/AB 633 Hunting with an Air gun.
 - 23 SB 411/AB 430 The transportation of fish taken by hook and line.
 - 23 SB 34/AB 35 Free Fishing Weekend in January
 - 23 SB 587/AB 632 Muzzleloader definition
 - 23 SB 415/AB 425 Vehicle admission sticker and receipt validity time period.

Special Regulations for Assisting Disabled Hunters

John Mitchell brought up concerns about companions for disabled hunters possibly being ticketed and facing charges. Companions wear blaze for safety and frequently will carry the firearm and assist with field dressing the carcass. Companion's need to be careful when assisting in order to not be accused of being in the act of hunting. It was recommended that companions only carry firearms if they are not loaded.

LUNCH BREAK 11:30am – 12:15pm

Devil's Lake State Park Accessibility

Jack wants the DNR to look at more options within Devil's Lake State Park to enable access to the bluffs for disabled persons, especially rock-climbing groups. There is a fire road that hikers can take that will get them near to the paved Ice Age Trail (IAT), but there is a portion between the fire road and IAT that could be made accessible and allow for universal access. There is currently a proposed project for trail upgrades to create more universal trail access at Devil's Lake, specifically the West Bluff Overlook. We do plan to reschedule the DAC visit Devil's Lake State Park once there are more accessible projects funded and completed.

Jack also recommended that for blind people it helps to put bumps or a different textured surface where the trail meets the road and where turns are necessary. However, this does make it more difficult for wheelchair users.

Further discussion ensued regarding Power Driven Mobility Device (PDMD) permits. How do people know to ask for one and how do they know where they can/ cannot be used?

This discussion was tabled until the next meeting.

Reservation Site Accessibility

On the camping reservation website, the date field will not work without a mouse. Nick will contact IT and the subcontractor CAMIS to make them aware and correct the issue.

Accessibility Awareness

Amy is looking for someone from the DNR to come speak at the Parkinson's Victory Summit in Green Bay so that attendees of the conference can understand what sites in the State Park system are accessible and how they can better use Wisconsin State Parks. As the Accessibility Coordinator this is part of Nick's job duties.

Amy wanted to approach the topic of how-to bring awareness of a person's abilities and disabilities to their attention. How do we deal with people who may not be assessing their own disability and progression through self-awareness? For example, someone who is legally blind, driving a boat. Is there any sort of ombudsman or intermediary within the DNR who can help resolve conflict? It was advised to call a DNR Warden for reckless driving.

Additional discussion ensued about education of the public and an awareness of what ADA really is for and what it's not for and understanding what your personal responsibility is. There should be more public visibility of DNR events with accessible activities and components. Groups that organize these events and Parks needs to do better at promoting the events to the disabled community and general public. Nick would also like to see expanded recreation opportunities for people with disabilities, like introduction to accessible camping. There is an R3 (Parks) team, who is responsible for getting people interested in hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, etc.; retaining people that already do it and introducing new people.

Discussion was tabled until next meeting.

Ice Age Trail

Andrew Hanson, (IAT Liaison) has offered to speak at the DAC meeting in December or March 2025 as a follow-up to previous discussion about accessibility along IAT. The group would like him to join us in December.

Accessibility Coordinator Updates

- **Playgrounds** – Yellowstone State Park has a new Playground being constructed using rubber poured-in-place surfacing. Moving forward, this is the preferred surface. Nick would prefer adding more Outdoor Classrooms, like the one at Richard Bong State Recreational Area, instead of typical playgrounds. Outdoor Classrooms are more inclusive and allows for other sensory experiences.
- **Bureau Director Updates and Minutes** Consolidated meeting minutes were sent to effected Bureau Directors and will be done moving forward. Feedback received from the council to Meeting Facilitator is that minutes are too long, and they would also like to see them shortened.

Public Comments - None

Accessible Equipment/ Website – Nick has emailed and been working with IT to get websites fully accessible when using a screen reader and making online fillable forms (Cabin reservations) usable for everyone. Nick continues to work on getting a list of all available universally accessible equipment.

Membership Update – Since the last meeting and appointment of new members (Amy- was alternate, Jack and Lindsay) we have had one member, Andrea Frisch, step down. Due to the recent recruitment and applicant pool, John Fritz was asked to be the alternate and Amy was asked to move up from alternate to full member. We have one member who has not responded to the last two meetings and Chairman Martinson will reach out to them.

Action Steps

- **Contact CAMIS about date field in camping reservations.**
- **Devil's Lake Projects & estimated completion.**
- **Add tabled topics to next agenda**
- **IAT in December**
- **Governor Thompson Projects for September meeting**
- **Contact Engineering about step textures**

Member's Updates – Requested via email. None received.

Adjourn

Calvin moved to adjourn the meeting. Kirsten seconded. All present in favor.

Chair Martinson adjourned the meeting at 2:47 pm.

*****Property tour of fishing pier, beach and cabin followed business meeting.**