

**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
FRIDAY DECEMBER 17, 2021
VIA SKYPE**

Members Present via Skype: Cathryn Scott, Keith Pamperin, Kirsten Engel, John Martinson, Calvin Richtig, Jim Rutledge, Andrea Frisch and John Mitchell

Members absent: Patricia Ardovino

Others Present via Skype: Barry Gilbeck, Nick Zouski, and Julie Amakobe

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

First item on the agenda was the Introduction of new DAC Member Shannon Columb. Shannon introduced herself to the Council and said she was thrilled to be part of the Council. Shannon is an Americorps Member in La Crosse. She has visual impairments--no peripheral vision and night blindness. In 2014 Shannon received her dog "Frasier". Shannon has a website called the Blind Naturalist and she will send the website address to Julie.

First, the Council reviewed the agenda. Julie asked to add setting the DAC meeting dates for calendar year 2022.

Kirsten made a motion to approve the agenda with the addition of setting meeting dates for 2022. Cathryn seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Next, the Council reviewed the meeting minutes from September 23, 2021.

John Mitchell made a motion to approve the minutes from September 23, 2021. Keith seconded the motion with the addition under his Member's Updates that Adaptive Sportsman's Pheasant Hunt had all hunters in Trac chairs.

The next agenda item was Customer Service and Licensing Updates led by Barry.

- Archery and Crossbow seasons continue for deer until January 9.
- Antlerless-Only Holiday Hunt December 24 – January 1 in select units. See map online or in the regulations. Cannot gun hunt outside of the select units.
 - Hunters who possess a valid Class A or C permit:
 - May use their gun buck deer harvest authorization to take a buck statewide during any firearm deer season, including antlerless-only seasons. (Note: The unit must be open for gun hunting)
 - Must choose a land type (public/private) when selecting their Farmland (Zone 2) antlerless deer harvest authorizations and adhere to their land use type selection when participating in other seasons outside the department-sponsored Gun Deer Hunt for Hunters with Disabilities.
 - May use one Farmland (Zone 2) antlerless deer harvest authorization issued with their gun deer license or their archer/crossbow license to take an antlerless deer in any unit statewide. (Note: The unit must be open for gun hunting)
 - If the disabled hunter purchased both a gun and archer/crossbow license or a patron license, they may use two of their Farmland (Zone 2) antlerless deer harvest authorizations in any unit statewide.
- Bear and Turkey deadline was last Friday.
 - Drawings will be conducted as soon as possible.
- Class A and C disabled hunting information now available on disabled hunting web page: <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/hunt/disdeer.html> There also a link on the White-tailed deer hunting web page.
- Legislation
 - [SB 176](#) – passed out of committee on 6/16/21. Available for scheduling by full Senate. This bill establishes Wisconsin resident disabled veterans with a service-connected disability of 50% or greater or who is individually unemployable may purchase a conservation patron license for \$65 instead of the regular \$165 fee. This bill also decreases the required minimum disability rating from 70 percent to 50 percent to purchase a reduced fee (\$3) annual fishing license and receive the free Disabled Veteran State Park Admission/Trail Pass Card. **Passed out of committee 06/17/21. Available for scheduling 06/17/21.**
 - [AB 165 \(see also SB 192\)](#) – combining archer and crossbow hunting licenses. Still in committee.
 - [AB 421 \(see also SB 422\)](#) – access to WisDOT records for State IDs. Still in committee **Public hearing was scheduled but then cancelled. Chair of Assembly Sporting Heritage Committee has stated he wishes to meet on this bill after the holidays, so hopefully we will see some action on this bill.**
 - [AB 434 \(see also SB 438\)](#) - medical professionals certifying conditions/eligibility for disabled permits. Allows PTs and OTs to certify an applicant for a disabled hunting/fishing permit meets eligibility criteria for issuance of permit. Still in committee.

- [AB 346 \(see also SB 397\)](#) - a fishing license for a child with a disability. This bill requires the Department of Natural Resources and to issue an annual fishing license to resident and nonresident children that present documentation from a medical professional that they have a disability defined in s. 106.50 (1m) (g). Documentation must be a certificate from a licensed physician or psychologist who has personally examined the child and who has expertise concerning the type of physical or mental disability evidenced by the child. Per s. 106.50(1m)(g), "Disability" means a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a record of having such an impairment or being regarded as having such an impairment. Still in committee.
- Act 70 signed into law increasing the maximum weight of a UTV to 3,000 pounds.

Next the Council welcomed the Office of Communications Director Sarah Hoyer. Sarah joined the meeting to talk to the DAC about DNR's Communications Plan. Sarah introduced herself. She indicated she has worked with Nick on a plan to get us through this year. She wants to know what the new things are that are happening with accessibility. Sarah's Office is all about getting the accessibility items out to the public. Open the Outdoors will be revamped, but she needs more information. What adaptive equipment does the DNR have? What boating and fishing opportunities are out there? Nick said the DNR website has been a topic for discussion a lot lately. The location of the tab and the name Open the Outdoor should be changed so everyone knows it relates to accessibility. Sarah informed the Council the "tiles" are temporary, so you will need to what you want to promote during a certain time period. The Office of Communications is constantly changing the tiles. Nick and/or the DAC need to let the Office know what the DAC wants to showcase. Sarah said at least monthly this page gets changed. She indicated the DAC should submit something now for January and gave an example of "sit skis". The Council wanted Accessibility on top which is the main banner where it says "Hunting, Fishing, etc.". The DAC wanted to make a motion stating it wants a top tab like "Accessibility". Sarah said unfortunately this format is basically locked in and chances for this change are slim.

Before we went on, the DAC introduced themselves to Sarah and she introduced herself also. She came to DNR in 2019 when appointed by Governor Evers. Sarah worked in news for 20 years including CNN and Aljazeera. She stressed accessibility is very important to Secretary Cole. She said she wants to talk to many DAC members for the DNR Magazine. If there is any information a member might have, he/she should get it to her. Keith said the DAC started to discuss the accessibility features at DNR properties. Surprisingly no inventory existed. Nick said he is working with Parks to get these inventoried so people can use them. Sarah shares this interest! She wants to know where there are accessible features at the parks. Nick said a survey was sent out to Parks to get each Park's accessible features. He wants a centralized area so customers can get access to this information easily. Sarah indicated she does not have access to that. She said she can help move this along. Nick will reach out to her. Cathryn is looking at the Parks' website. There was a map, but where did it go? Kirsten said you have to go to a specific park and then you can get to the map. It was stated people need to find it easily. How do people know where to go? It appears one has to go through many layers to find it. Sarah said this can be changed to make it easier. She didn't know the DAC even existed until this meeting.

Kirsten is wondering if as a user if someone is looking for accessibility and since we can't change the top items, he/she goes to "Hunting, she won't see anything related to accessibility and hunting. Sarah said this can be changed easily, this information can put on the side (there is an opening for that). Sarah said they will need to "link" to something. Each tab needs a link that goes somewhere. Nick will work on this with Sarah. Keith said there is a need for better communication. For example, Potawatomi State park has had an accessible kayak. No one has used it for four years. Mirror Lake has an accessible restroom, but one needs to go to the entrance to get the key. This needs to get improved. Nick said this is an individual park issue "to lock or not to lock". Calvin chimed in. The DNR needs to highlight the State Parks and the accessibility features from each park. More people with disabilities will use the Parks if they have these highlights. Many parks have cabins, many have accessible piers, etc. Sarah is willing to get the information out, for example, that you have to sign up for the kayak in advance at Potawatomi. Sarah says Nick and/or the DAC should bring this issue up to the new Parks Director Steve Schmelzer; he needs to know this. Andrea spoke about the need to have closed captions on social media photos credits.

The next agenda item on the agenda was Accessibility Coordinator Updates.

- 1) Brule River State Forest Hunter Cabin – Nick indicated the cabin is scheduled to be open for the spring turkey hunting season. The Cross Country Ski Groups are upset with DNR building this cabin. The cabin is going to be closed during the winter. Since hunting and skiing seasons overlap, the path will need to be cleared near where the 6 trails converge. DNR might have to move 50 miles of ski trails to accommodate this. The cabin is to be used for hunters and cross country skiers. DNR had public meetings on this, so it was approved. First priority is for hunting because the funding is from a Pitman Robinson grant (hunting). Placement of the cabin is at the junction of the 6 trails. Keith asked how the application process was going to look like. Nick thought the process would be like renting a campsite.
- 2) All Terrain Chair Hosting Site Agreement – Nick said the agreement was taken out of the DNR Secretary's Office and kicked down to the Bureau of Parks. It is no longer in Nick's hands. Nick sent an e-mail to meet with the Director of Parks. Hopefully, they will meet soon and get this done.
- 3) Dog Trail Availability at Willow River State Park – Nick got a message a few months ago from an older gentleman in the WRST area who has a mobility disability. He walks the trails and he is sometimes challenging to work with. He filed a grievance with the Department. Unfortunately, the DNR cannot change the designation of trails. They have been like this for years. However, there was a compromise. There is one nature trail he likes that doesn't allow dogs. This trail is going to be changed to an undesignated trail and not a nature trail which will allow him to take his dog.
- 4) Accessibility Tile on DNR Website – Nick did not get a straight answer regarding his inquiry into having an accessibility tile on the DNR website. Currently on the DNR website, there are several different tiles. Briefly, there was one for accessibility. However, it was taken down. The tiles change with the seasonal changes. Nick wants

the accessibility tile to be permanent. This will likely not happen (see previous discussion with Office of Communications Director Sarah Hoyer).

- 5) Update on Accessible Cabins – Nick updated Shannon on DNR’s accessible cabins. He informed her DNR has 8 fully accessible cabins and 2 smaller ones with electricity. Nick doesn’t see any more larger ones being built due to the cost. He said the smaller ones are nice, but they do not have a bathroom or shower. A while ago Nick proposed a hybrid of the two cabin types. Kevin Feind, Supervisor at Pattison and Amnicon Falls State Parks is retiring soon and he and a friend want to build a cabin up in that area. The design of this cabin is without a bathroom. Subsequently Nick is working with Missy from the Bureau of Parks and Kevin and his friend. They are looking at constructing a camper cabin. A camper cabin would be a rustic cabin or rustic cabin with a bathroom. Nick is advocating for the latter. Although some locations do not have access to a nearby sewer and water lines. Nick wants to add the bathrooms to the rustic cabins. Still in a preliminary stage, a cost estimate needs to be conducted to see if these camper cabins can be done financially. Camper cabin projects will need to be added to the Capital Development’s 6 Year Plan. Sometimes it may not be ideal to be located next to the sewer and water lines. Sometimes you want to be out away from other campers. Nick said there might be lines already running out that way at the Pattison SP location. Nick reminded the Council there is the ”Lodging Lobby” too that we must take into consideration. Each State Park is allowed to have one cabin for persons with disabilities. Andrea said it would be good to have more of these rustic cabins throughout the State. She said she has stayed at the rustic cabins at Copper Falls and Blue Mounds.

John Martinson asked about Diane Brusoe’s input. Since there currently is no official cabin proposal, she is not yet involved. Nick informed the Council Steve Schmelzer, Parks Bureau Director, is on board with this. Keith said he was authorized to write a letter to Diane Brusoe and Calvin reviewed and it is ready to go out. In the letter Keith describes how much DAC appreciates the current accessible cabins and the need for additional ones. A draft will go out first to the DAC members and then Nick. Calvin said he will review and get it back to him by next Monday. Kirsten said for Members to review it via e-mail. Then Calvin can make the changes suggested by other DAC members and give a deadline for those changes.

- 6) Bureau of Parks to Add a Tab to the Parks Page – Nick isn’t sure how this is going to work. Possibly each park on its page will add a tab which will have a link to Open the Outdoors webpage AND a list of that park’s accessible features. He will follow up with the Bureau of Parks.

John Mitchell talked about the location where they want to place the accessible waterfowl blind. There was an e-mail asking if DNR has funding for that? Did anyone respond to that e-mail? Did someone reply? Nick said someone did reply. John wants to get a letter out to this individual. It’s been two years. Nick will follow up with John and get the letter out.

Next was the Accessible Cabins Reservation System- Nick said he received message from an individual with a disability who has used the cabins in the past. He camps along with other families. In the past, a camper would have to wait until after January 1st to reserve a campsite. Now a camper can go online and reserve a campsite(s) nine months in advance. But those persons with disabilities who want to reserve the accessible cabins have to wait until January. Nick brought this issue/problem to Section Chief Chris Pedretti, who oversees the Reserve System in the Bureau of Parks. They are still having discussions. Nick thinks they can just add the accessible cabins to the rest of the reserve system. There is a mechanism for priority groups to be part of this 9 month advance reservation. It is a technical issue. Kirsten asked if they have to prove anything with the accessible cabin application. Andrea said it is self reporting since she has used the cabins before. Nick said he will follow up with the Bureau of Parks to see if this approach can be accomplished.

SB 422 Public Hearing – Barry updated the Council on this agenda item under his updates.

DAC Member Attendance Policy – Kirsten pulled up her notes from their meeting. Cathryn, Kirsten, and John met regarding recruiting new members. She talked first about the Alternate's role (no voting, but automatic when a position opens up). When a position opens up the Council will do a self assessment where they are with recruiting a new member. The DAC will specify where it needs representation (disability) and what the target will be for marketing purposes. A preference will be given to "x" persons. However, the Council will take all applications. The DAC wants to implement this process as quickly as possible. Deadlines will be set when applications need to be submitted with very a specific timeline. First, a Committee consisting of 2 DAC members and 3 DNR staff will blind score the applications. The applicant will score more points if the he/she meets the criteria the Council is looking for. Then the full Council will meet and ask the applicant any questions for about 10 minutes. The Council will make sure the applicant is fully committed. The written attendance policy will be handed to new members so they know what to expect. The attendance policy should be in the marketing announcement so the applicant knows the importance of attendance. Jim asked if the applicants are still brought before the Secretary of the DNR. The answer is "Yes". The DNR Secretary appoints the DAC members. There will be a three person interviewing team who will make a recommendation to the full Council for a final interview. Andrea asked about having the application only to be good for one year. This won't be necessary since the denial letter will indicate the DNR encourages the applicant to reapply next time it has an opening.

Kirsten informed the Council it needs to update the application, the scoring system and the DAC website. Andrea said she would like to help with the subcommittee which includes Cathryn, Kirsten, and John Martinson) assignments. Julie will get the subcommittee the current application, scoring system and any other information they may need.

Now regarding this current situation. John Martinson has made several attempts to contact the DAC member who has not attended a meeting in a few months and has not heard back. He will be sending out a letter confirming the member's termination.

It was stated the Council needs to start recruiting now. The application needs to be updated first. Nick said the DAC currently needs representation from any of the following groups: someone

living up North, a minority, someone from the deaf community, a person with a sensory processing disorder or neuro-divergent, a large body sized person, a person with chemical sensitivities, and a person with cognitive disabilities. Kirsten said she can reach out to the Autism group in Northern Wisconsin. Kirsten also mentioned the Color the Outdoors group. Andrea indicated she can get in touch with the Wisconsin School for the Deaf; maybe a teacher would be interested. It was asked if there is an Independent Living Center (ILC) for the Native American Community. Calvin said the ILC is run by the County and then by Tribal Entities. Calvin can make sure that the ILCs get the information. Nick said he wrote up a short notice for the ILCs in the past. Nick will send out the notice to the subcommittee. Nick is to figure out the application and send it to subcommittee.

The next agenda is this is Jim's last meeting. The DAC members were very appreciative of Jim's long time dedication to the Council. Jim has contributed so much! He joined the DAC on April 12, 1990. Jim was Chairman of the DAC for several years as well. Maybe the Council can meet at a later date in person for a formal farewell.

Next the Council set the meetings and locations for 2022.

March meeting – Friday March 18th at Horicon Marsh Educational Center

June meeting – Thursday June 23 and Friday June 24 at Buckhorn State Park

September meeting – Thursday September 22 and Friday September 23 at Peninsula State Park

December meeting – Friday December 16 at Fitchburg or call in

The final agenda item was the Members' Updates. Members are to e-mail Julie with any updates.

John Martinson – None at this time.

Jim Rutledge – None at this time.

Keith – None at this time.

Andrea – WisCorps successfully completed the 2021 field season in early November. Fifty-five (55) young adults completed the crew program which included 72 weeks of conservation projects throughout Wisconsin, Isle Royale National Park, and Indiana Dunes National Park. One project to note, WisCorps built an accessible fishing pier next to the Minong Ranger Station.

Calvin – None at this time.

Shannon – None at this time.

John Mitchell - Adaptive Sportsmen Web Page has been updated to show its 2022 Calendar of Events.

Kirsten – None at this time.

Cathryn – None at this time.

Cathryn made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Keith seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Chair Martinson adjourned the meeting at 3:05pm.