

**Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources  
Natural Resources Board Agenda Item**

**SUBJECT:** Inception to date summary report regarding hunting and trapping in state parks as expanded by 2011 Act 168. Follow up from February, 2014 WM-21-13 agenda item in which the NRB adopted permanent rules pursuant to 2011 Act 168.

**FOR:** June 2014 Board meeting

**TO BE PRESENTED BY:** Dan Schuller, Director, Bureau of Parks and Recreation

**SUMMARY:**

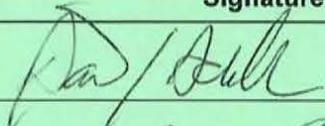
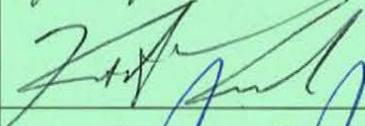
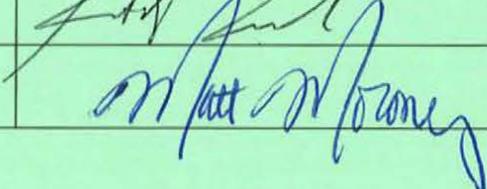
Dan Schuller, Parks Director, will brief the NRB regarding the implementation of 2011 Act 168, after adoption of permanent rules and a spring 2013, fall 2013 and spring 2014 hunting and trapping season. This update was requested by the NRB in February of 2014 and will briefly address how hunting and trapping seasons have been implemented in Wisconsin State Parks and the experience visitors have had related to these new types of recreation. This is anticipated to be a one-time informational item only.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Information Only

**LIST OF ATTACHED MATERIALS (check all that are applicable):**

WSPS 1 yr hunt trap summary for NRB

NA

Approved by	Signature	Date
Dan Schuller, Bureau Director		5/20/14
Kurt Thiede, Administrator		6/10/14
Cathy Stepp, Secretary		6/9/14

**Fall 2013 – Spring 2014**  
**Hunting and Trapping Activity in State Parks and Trails**

**Executive Summary**

1. Statewide, most property managers reported that **Act 168 did not significantly impact park operations or hunting pressure.**
  2. **No injuries, confrontations or incidents reported** resulting from implementation of Act 168.
  3. **No significant law enforcement issues developed** because of Act 168, very few citations or reported conflicts between user groups.
  4. **Low number of complaints** from visitors of the expanded opportunities of hunting and the new activity of trapping statewide.
  5. **Statewide, few new hunters/trappers** using state parks. **Most were returning users.**
  6. Participation in the spring 2014 turkey hunting season was low statewide due primarily to weather. It was also the last year for the unique state park turkey management zones. Staff reported receiving a number of questions regarding this change.
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**Northeast District**

Northeast Park District Properties reported Act 168 did not significantly affect overall park operations. The following highlights common themes reported by property managers and staff:

- Low overall number of complaints from visitors of the expanded opportunities of hunting and the new activity of trapping.
- All parks in the NED previously had some form of hunting. The properties with new hunting and trapping opportunities observed few individuals taking advantage of these opportunities. The new activity of deer bow hunting, at the majority of properties, seemed to be the most popular.
- No new law enforcement issues developed because of Act 168.
- Some confusion among park staff on the status of park access permits, park deer and turkey management units, and existing firearm restrictions for the 2013 and future seasons.
- Overall, the 2014 Spring Turkey Hunting activity was extremely light in all NED state park properties. A few properties did not see a turkey hunter.
- Parks that had turkey hunting prior to 2011 ACT 168 (Hartman Creek and Newport) noticed hunting activity down compared to previous years. No user conflicts reported.

**Governor Thompson State Park**

- Park staff observed hunter activity during the early bow season. Approximately 12 bow hunters were observed; at least three deer were harvested.
- Approximately eight grouse and one turkey hunters were observed
- Normal numbers of deer gun hunters and harvest numbers were observed. Note: GTSP provided deer gun hunting previous to Act 168.
- A few small game hunters were observed in December.
- No muzzleloader hunters were noted.
- No trappers were found using the property.
- No complaints.
- Typically, hunters at GTSP are thankful for the opportunity to hunt the park during the nine day gun deer season. Many favorable comments were received.

## Fall 2013 – Spring 2014 Hunting and Trapping Activity in State Parks and Trails

### Hartman Creek State Park

- Hartman showed a decrease in the number of hunters on opening day of the 9 day gun deer season. Staff not sure the decrease was due to Act 168, the cold weather, or a combination of the two. Estimates are we were down 20% from years past.
- Concerns from hunters over the southwest corner of the park. In years past deer hunters were able to hunt this area for the 9-day gun deer and late bow.
- Overall very few concerns or complaints were received. The transition went fairly smoothly.

### High Cliff State Park

- Only one trapper contacted the park regarding raccoon trapping.
- Approximately 15 people inquired about small game hunting, no small game hunters were observed over the hunting season.
- Approximately 20 people bow hunted during the week of the 15<sup>th</sup>. A few new hunters (<5) bow-hunted during the 9 day gun season.
- The south end of the park is restricted to hunting and trapping which is a change from previous hunting opportunities.

### Newport State Park

- For the period before the regular 9-day deer hunt, several bow hunters and one turkey hunter utilized the open areas of the park for hunting.
- For the regular 9-day deer gun season, 17 deer were taken out of the park. This has been a traditional hunt in the park and there was not a noticeable increase in hunters, status quo from past years.
- For the muzzleloader season (had been open in the past prior to Act 168), staff observed a couple of hunters. These were hunters that had used the park in the past.
- The park was open in the past to late bow hunting. Staff observed a few late bow hunters. Again these were folks that hunted the park in the past prior to Act 168.
- There were no conflicts and no issues. Other than the early bow and turkey hunters there was no noticeable difference in the number of hunters.
- The 9-day deer gun hunters were very appreciative that the traditional hunting area had been re-opened for the 9-day season.

### Peninsula State Park

- The hunting and trapping season for 2013 at Peninsula State Park occurred successfully. There was one antlerless deer harvested during the early bow season and three antlerless/five antlered during the 9-day muzzleloader season for a total of 9 registered deer at Peninsula State Park.
- Park staff did register deer from the adjoining DMU during early/late bow season and the 9-day deer gun season. Good opportunity to have personal contacts with hunters and discuss the new hunting and trapping rules in the Wisconsin State Park System – positive customer service.
- The park did not receive any formal complaints. There was concern/discussion from park users regarding “road hunting” due to cold temperatures with the 9-day gun season. LE staff monitored this situation with our local warden. No violations were discovered.
- The park visitor services staff did handle a few upset park visitors during the holiday season in the park office that were not happy with hunting/trapping in state parks.
- Managers worked with LE staff to adjust enforcement shifts / hours to better assist with LE coverage and customer service during the 9-day season.
- Staff was not aware of any trapping that occurred on the property in 2013.
- The general public did inquire into hunting a variety of species which we were able to respond to accordingly having increased our on-site publications for various species.

## Fall 2013 – Spring 2014

### Hunting and Trapping Activity in State Parks and Trails

- Park Access Permits for 80C did not sell out even with the requirement that bow hunters needed the access permits in 2013.

#### Potawatomi State Park

- Staff observed very few hunters. During the 9-day gun season, about 12 deer were harvested in the park.
- A few complaints were received from visitors regarding hunting and trapping opportunities in the park.

#### Rock Island State Park

- Act 168 had no impact on Rock Island's long standing history of deer hunting dating back to 1965.
- Weather impacted the season due to unseasonably cold temperatures and gale force winds for the deer gun opener.
- Harvest numbers were in the normal range; three by bow and 15 by gun
- Gun hunting days were normal. Approximately 140 hunter days effort for gun season.
- There were approximately 65 camper days for gun season. About 15 hunters camped each night the first 4 days despite cold and high winds.
- Staff did not observe any trapping or small game hunting.
- No complaints were taken for anything but weather.

#### Whitefish Dunes State Park

- Staff observed very few hunters in the park.
- Approximately eight deer were harvested during the nine day gun deer season in the park.
- A few complaints were received from visitors regarding the expanded hunting and trapping opportunities in the park.

### Northwest District

All Northwest District work units submitted summaries. Most reported that **Act 168 did not significantly impact park operations or hunting pressure**. Those locations with increased deer hunting pressure were properties that offered a new hunting opportunity, change in antlered/antlerless status or significantly increased available hunting acreage. Most **parks with pre-existing deer hunting opportunities reported no appreciable increase in activity** from previous years. Those with new or expanded bow hunting opportunities did see limited additional new hunter numbers. District wide, there was **minimal small game hunting and trapping activity**. Enforcement actions involved the expected common deer hunting violations. Other enforcement contacts including hunting in closed areas, use of improper weapons, and access issues were handled by educating and if necessary warnings.

#### Amnicon Falls State Park

- There was a lot of hunting activity that occurred at Amnicon Falls. 3-5 people hunted before rifle season and 20-25 hunted the park from the beginning of rifle season to the January 7 close. During this time period I did not witness any evidence of trapping occurring on the park property. There was one confirmed harvest of a small yearling buck on the park.
- The hunting season ran very smoothly for the most part other than a few violations of leaving stands out overnight or leaving stands unattended without name/address or customer ID. There were also a few violations that involved cutting branches on trees to allow for easier set up of tree stands.

#### Bearskin State Trail

- Hunting is not allowed on the Bearskin Trail.

## Fall 2013 – Spring 2014 Hunting and Trapping Activity in State Parks and Trails

### Big Bay State Park

- The fall hunting season at Big Bay was not significantly affected by ACT 168 since the park already had an archery season and the gun season.
- The locations hunting is now allowed were already mapped out and designated prior to ACT 168 as well. Being on an island, the numbers of hunters is somewhat limiting in general compared to other parks, and we did not see a significant change in use of the park in regards to hunting or trapping due to ACT 168.

### Brunet Island State Park

- There was some interest in trapping at Brunet Island, but the early cold/ice cover dissipated that interest.
- There were a few inquiries about other forms of hunting but we did not see much activity.

### Buckhorn State Park

- No issues of people hunting in wrong area that we were aware of (usually was 1-3 per year).
- Still had a small amount of bow hunters in the bow only area during gun season all had blaze orange.
- More maps posted throughout the hunting areas seemed to help.
- Staff helped 2 groups track deer from gun to bow only area.
- Roughly same number of hunters as previous years. More hunters in open gun area of park than the Yellow River Wildlife Area which is twice the size, same as previous 3 years.

### Copper Falls State Park

- The 2013 gun deer season went with no real incidents. We actually have been seeing a reduced number of hunters utilizing the parks open areas from previous years.
- The only violation that we had cited was for a person over baiting. This person was also hunting in a closed area of the park that he thought was private property. He was issued a warning for this violation. Otherwise we had no issues with the implementation of ACT 168.

### Great River/ Buffalo River State Trails

- No controversy or unusual enforcement problems. Both trails have been open to hunt for more than 20 years. Act 168 did not change hunting opportunities along either trail.

### Interstate State Park

- The first year of Act 168 implementation saw an increase in the number of hunters most of the 9 day gun deer season.
- Some visitors, like past years were disappointed that hunting was occurring in hiking areas they enjoyed.
- Hunting outside the gun deer season was extremely limited.

### Kinnickinnic State Park

- Overall the implementation of Act 168 had little noticeable effect on Kinnickinnic State Park.
- We had a reasonable amount of interest and questions about the new rules.
- Hunters pursued small game, pheasants and deer in the park. For small game and pheasants the success was fairly low and I did not see many people actively hunting these types of game.
- The gun deer season brought average numbers of hunters into the park and success was decent. The park has always been open for gun deer, so the new act did not bring a change in this area.
- The early archery season was quiet and I did not see any hunters or hear of any deer being brought out of the park. Late archery was also quiet, however I saw several hunters using the park. Archery success is unknown.
- I did not receive any complaints regarding hunting or hunters in the park. I also did not see any user conflict caused by the new rules.

## Fall 2013 – Spring 2014 Hunting and Trapping Activity in State Parks and Trails

- The non-hunting users I had contact with were understanding. I anticipate the hunting of small game, pheasant and early archery to increase in the park.

### Merrick State Park

- Light small game hunting activity (two known instances). No known trapping. Several inquiries to clarify seasons and areas open to hunt.

### Lake Wissota State Park

- Hunting pressure was low and no trapping that we are aware of.
- No issues with hunters. New hunting map seemed to be working.

### Pattison State Park

- There was very little hunting activity at Pattison prior to gun deer season.
- During opening weekend there were three people hunting at Pattison through park property access points. By closing weekend of gun deer season, I estimate that 10 hunters hunted the entire park property.
- There was one person trapping prior to gun deer season using under water sets for beaver.
- The hunting season went very well at Pattison. The majority of hunters parked in day use parking lots or access roads. There was no evidence of any violations on park property.
- Non-hunters continued to camp and use trails at the park throughout the open hunting season at the park with no conflicts at all.

### Perrot State Park

- Perrot saw very light small game hunting. Only one small game hunter was encountered by staff during the season. Trapping was conducted by one individual that we are aware of.
- Two known bow hunters entered the park following the traditional gun season and each returned several times to hunt. Hunting pressure other than during traditional gun season was light.
- We received a number of inquiries regarding access to the park and the hunting seasons. Staff responded with clarifying deer hunting information posted at each access point to the park and at trail heads offering access to open hunting areas.
- We did receive a number of comments expressing disappointment that the park had been opened to additional hunting. After some discussion we determined these comments were based on personal safety concerns and wildlife viewing opportunities. By discussing concerns, demonstrating the compact hunting seasons offered and areas set aside for safety, staff seemed to appease some of those concerns.
- During the deer hunt a number of hunters expressed concern about the future of the DMU at Perrot. These individuals are repeat users of the DMU and were anxious about possible changes in their hunting experience.

### Rib Mountain State Park

- Numbers of hunters appeared to be down from years past, however the weather could have been a contributing factor.

### Roche-A-Cri State Park

- Opening weekend had 30+ people the 1<sup>st</sup> day, 20+ the 2<sup>nd</sup> day and still a lot of hikers. Other weekends had about 20 hunters at a time. A lot of people parking around the perimeter roads around park.
- Hunting maps were posted in bulletin boards since summer and in map box at winter lot; local newspaper had articles about hunting in state parks.
- Closed to hunting signs around the mound and campground helped – no reports of people hunting in those areas.

## Fall 2013 – Spring 2014 Hunting and Trapping Activity in State Parks and Trails

### Straight Lake State Park

- Straight Lake had no major issues during the hunting and trapping seasons.
- The new change of no hunting within 100 yards of the Ice Age Trail was well received, with no contacts made with hunters hunting within 100 yards of the Ice Age Trail.
- Hunter interest, especially from bow hunters, was rather high leading up to the season. During the gun deer season, the number of hunters was similar to last year with a little increase in pressure in the southern portions of the park.
- Other than the gun deer season, it seemed that hunting pressure was rather low.
- There were some calls about trapping beaver in the park, but it is unknown how many trappers actually used the park.
- Non Hunter use of the park remained similar to last year during the open seasons.

### Tuscobia State Trail

- The Tuscobia has always been open to gun deer hunting so there were no problems or issues that arose.
- The hunting pressure for bow hunting and small game was light.
- The Tuscobia is a very narrow corridor for hunting and most hunters choose not to use it.

### Wildcat Mountain State Park

- Bow hunting w/72A access permit starting Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>.
- 50+ vehicles opening weekend gun deer season at park.
- Previous years were antlerless only. This year hunters were allowed to harvest bucks which brought in permit holders to hunt during the archery Nov 15 opener. Also saw more permit holders consistently hunting in the park throughout the season in an effort to harvest a buck.
- Very little if any small game hunting was seen.
- At least two trappers used the park.

### Willow River State Park

- Willow River and Kinnickinnic had very few issues with the Act 168 implementation.
- Both parks have had gun and late bow deer hunting in the past so most visitors were used to hunting taking place in the park that time of year. Also since we fall in a metro hunting unit, the gun deer season was 23 days long so that took some adjusting to.
- Overall it was a safe and successful hunting season.

### Southeast District

Overall, Southeast Park District Properties reported **Act 168 did not significantly affect overall park operations**. With the higher number of Southern Forest Properties and properties within urban areas the hunting law did not have much impact to the southeast. A far colder than average spring 2014 reduced turkey hunting participation across the district. The following highlights common themes reported by property managers and staff:

1. Low number of complaints from visitors of the expanded opportunities of hunting and the new activity of trapping.
2. There was minimal hunter confusion, due to correct regulation language and some areas within town ordinance weapons restriction areas.

## Fall 2013 – Spring 2014 Hunting and Trapping Activity in State Parks and Trails

3. No new law enforcement issues developed because of Act 168. Very few violations were cited.

### Big Foot Beach State Park

- There has been very little to no impact of Act 168 at Big Foot Beach State Park.
- The property went from no hunting to now allowing Archery hunting in the open areas of the property from Nov. 15 through the Sunday nearest Jan. 6.
- Trapping is now allowed in the open areas of the property from Nov. 15 - Dec. 15.
- There has been an increase in communication with the community regarding hunting on the property.
- The park borders a high school and is within Lake Geneva city limits. The changes brought on a lot of concern from the community but through staff efforts to bring awareness about policy and regulations, concerns were greatly diminished.
- There haven't been any hunters/trappers these past two years.
- Park staff reports that maybe a handful of people are interested in hunting on the property but don't think anyone has actually come out to hunt.

### Hank Aron State Trail

- No hunting was allowed. It is in the city of Milwaukee where they cannot legally discharge a fire arm.

### Harrington Beach State Park

- The local Conservation Warden checked various hunters in the field and registered multiple deer that were harvested.
- There were no hunting accidents.
- There was one citation issued to a hunter who shot a deer on the park road directly in front of Park Ranger.
- There was a complaint about hunters driving deer in closed areas. This complaint resulted in the issuance of a citation.
- 25-30 in-person as well as phone complaints about hunters leaving gut piles in the middle of the Whitetail trail spur (9 gut piles). Property maintenance staff responded to the complaints and removed the piles from public view. Additional gut piles that were left in public view but off to the side of the trail were also removed. This behavior was also observed by property staff in 2012 on a different section of the property that was open to hunting. Staff was not able to correct this behavior through in person contacts with hunters. The concerns of visitors were responded to expeditiously.

### Kohler-Andrae State Park

- Not a lot changed at Kohler-Andrae regarding hunting and the implementation of Act 168.
- The permit system was still in place for Unit 77E which limited the number of hunters and hunting pressure.
- There were no hunting violations other than the regular issue of deer hunting stands being left overnight.
- Some hikers did express concerns about hunting being allowed in the Black River Trail area.

## Southwest District

Overall expanded hunting opportunities provided through Act 168 did not generate any major issues within South West District Parks. Department park staff did not issue any citations and responded to one hunting accident. Overall parks did not see a significant increase in hunters from previous years and low use from trappers.

Most parks within the South West District fall within turkey management zone 1 and have previously been open for spring turkey hunting under their own unique turkey management zone number. This was the last year for the unique turkey management zone and staff fielded a number of questions regarding this change. Properties within the district

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had no reported issues and experienced similar numbers of hunters and success as previous year. Properties that had not previously provided an opportunity for spring turkey hunting such as Sauk Prairie Recreation Area and Yellowstone State Park reported low hunter numbers and no incidents. One property reported answering questions from other park users not use to seeing hunters within the park.

General comments/reports provided by staff include:

- A couple of situations where hunters entered closed areas to track wounded deer. One situation resulted in a conflict between hunter and hiker.
- Park staff made a few contacts with hunters hunting in closed areas. No reported conflicts or citations issued.
- One response to a hunting accident, hunter slipped and broke his leg on a steep slope requiring assistance.
- A few parks received questions about utilizing dogs to hunt at night, no issues reported.
- Some confusion on whether limited and unlimited access permits were required.
- Some confusion on whether DMU's and TMU have remained.
- Some confusion on types of firearms allowed, both deer and small game.
- Two instances of local landowners with buildings close to state park property contacted the park stating that they had a concern of hunters shooting buildings and their safety. Signage informing the public of private land ahead and no discharging of a firearm with 100 yards posted. No issues during the hunting season reported.
- Hunters complained of large deer drives on opening morning of gun deer season.
- One verbal conflict between a trapper checking his traps and park user reported.
- No citations issued by park staff and one citation for hunting in a closed area issued by a warden.
- Multiple properties reported limited complaints from non-hunting park visitors, some left the property when they found out hunting was allowed.
- Low numbers of trappers, mainly raccoons and muskrats.
- Overall maps and printed regulations worked well.

### Aztalan State Park

- We didn't observe any issues at Aztalan. No citations or warnings were issued in 2013.

### Cross Plains State Ice Age Trail Area

- Citation given by Warden for hunting in a non-hunting area.
- Complaint from adjacent home owners stating hunters are too close to their property. We will be marking area with more signs in spring.

### Devils Lake State Park

- No issues, no citations issued.
- Hunting pressure high at Natural Bridge.
- Moderate hunting pressure at Devils Lake and Sauk Prairie Rec Area on opening gun deer weekend and low thereafter.
- Maps are working

### Glacial Drumlin State Trail

- We will have to sign area to help with location of non- hunting areas.

### Governor Dodge State Park

- No citations issued
- Lower hunting numbers than previous years

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### Governor Nelson State Park

- No Hunting.

### Lake Kegonsa State Park

- We believe approximately 6-10 people hunted in the park this past season. There were 2-3 people that hunted regularly.
- A few of our regular visitors made comments that they were not happy about the hunting, but only one regular visitor made repeated complaints.
- No citations or warnings were issued.

### Mirror Lake State Park

- A couple of trappers had very good success on west end of the lake for muskrat.
- One incidence between a trapper and park user after a goose was found in a trap. Goose was released and local field warden responded. No citations issued.

### Wyalusing State Park

- Contact made with hunters hunting in closed area, no citations issued.
- Hunting pressure was low.
- Two trappers for raccoon.
- Respond to one hunting accident, broken leg.

### Yellowstone State Park

- Maps and web page worked well.
- Lower number of hunters than previous years.
- Confusion on difference between state park and nearby wildlife area.
- No citations.

## Southern State Forests

### Havenwoods State Forest

- No hunting, no violations, no one has requested information about Act 168.

### Kettle Moraine State Forest - Northern Unit

- Nothing changed; Act 168 didn't affect the property.
- Enforcement action was normal.
- Levels of hunting activity were down due to the weather conditions.

### Kettle Moraine State Forest - Pike Lake & Loew Lake Units

- Pike Lake hunting is not allowed.
- Loew Lake Unit small game and deer hunting are allowed with a permit only.
- Muzzle loader gun deer season at Loew Lake.
- Nothing different compared to years past.
- Ice Age Trail properties; Polk Kames and Holy Hill were open due to Act 168.
- Increase in overall complaints - trespass, hunter walking along the trail with a loaded gun alarm hikers, deer stands left overnight and found within the safety corridor of the trail.
- Slight increase in contacts and violations.
- Holy Hill seemed to be a popular hunting area.
- Communication was good from the bureau and helped implement Act 168.

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**Hunting and Trapping Activity in State Parks and Trails**

Kettle Moraine State Forest - Southern & Lapham Peak Units

- No changes, no impact