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Wednesday, August 21, 2013

The Honorable Senator Neil Kedzie
Chair, Senate Natural Resources Committee
Room 313 South, State Capitol, Madison, WI 53707

RE: Assembly Bill 194, relating to the authority to hunt certain animals with a crossbow, establishing open seasons for hunting with a crossbow, and information required to be included on certain hunting license applications and certain hunting tags.

Dear Chair Kedzie and members of the Senate Natural Resources Committee:

At the 2013 Department of Natural Resources Annual Spring Fish & Wildlife Rule Hearings & Wisconsin Conservation Congress Annual County Meetings held on Monday, April 8, 2013, the Natural resources Board asked **Question 66 & 67 - Options to expand the use of crossbows.**

Crossbow use is currently allowed for anyone during firearm seasons for most species including deer. The use of crossbows for hunting deer outside the firearm deer seasons is limited to persons with certain disabled permits and persons over the age of 65. There has been considerable interest to expand deer hunting opportunity with crossbows outside the firearm deer seasons.

At a recent stakeholder meeting to discuss crossbow expansion there was significant support for expansion of crossbow use for deer hunting outside the firearm seasons. At the meeting there were two proposals put forth with Proposal #1 gaining the greatest consensus.

Policy makers are seeking public input on these two proposals to craft legislation necessary to expand crossbow hunting opportunity.

Proposal #1

This proposal was for full Inclusion; an Archery/Crossbow Season.

- Crossbow hunting for deer at any legal hunting age and running concurrent with the entire archery season.
- An Archery/Crossbow License that includes one buck tag and one antlerless tag that when purchased would identify if the hunter will be hunting with a bow, crossbow, or both.
- At the time of registration, harvest would be recorded as a bow or crossbow kill.
- The proposal also included "Last in-First out" language, meaning if for biological or social reasons the non-firearm harvest needed to be reduced, restrictions would be placed on crossbow use before any restrictions would be placed on bow use.

Proposal #2

This proposal was for a defined Crossbow Season and a separate Crossbow License.

- Crossbow hunting at any legal age with the purchase of a Crossbow License that includes one buck tag and one antlerless tag.
- The crossbow hunting season for any age would be limited to the start of the archery season and run through Sunday of the fourth week.
- Persons over the age of 65 and disabled hunters would continue to hunt the entire duration of the archery season.
- Only one buck total would be able to be harvested with possession of a crossbow and/or archery tag.

66. Do you favor proposal #1? YES____ NO____

67. Do you favor proposal #2? YES____ NO____

The statewide results for these questions were:

Question 66 – Votes Yes/2277, Votes No/2479, Majority/No, Counties Approving/43, Counties Rejecting/28, Counties Tie Vote/1, Counties Not Voting/0

Question 67 – Votes Yes/1263, Votes No/3395, Majority/No, Counties Approving/2, Counties Rejecting/70, Counties Tie Vote/0, Counties Not Voting/0

At the Wisconsin Conservation Congress' annual convention held in Eau Claire on May 10th and 11th, 2013, the Congress delegation supported their county vote and voted in favor of question 66. The Congress delegation upheld their county vote and rejected question 67. The Congress currently does not have a position on AB194 as written or the Senate's substitute amendment to AB194. The Congress' current position on crossbows is reflected by question 66 above and/or lowering the age limit to 55.

Respectfully,



Rob Bohmann, Chair
Wisconsin Conservation Congress