

Bow hunting Use in Grand River Wildlife Area

Whereas the Grand River Marsh (GRM) State Wildlife Area is a 7,000 acre property located in southwest Green Lake County and southeast Marquette County. There is a Waterfowl Closed Area, located on the west end of the wildlife area, which is managed to be a rest area for migrating waterfowl. As such the west end is closed to all hunting, trapping and boat access during all waterfowl seasons (except it is open for Regular Deer Gun and Muzzleloader Deer Hunting). WDNR policy has long been to prohibit uses such as bowhunting and restrict access in the closed area during the migration season. However, local bowhunters believe that deer hunting and the closed area's waterfowl refuge intent can co-exist on this public property. Therefore this resolution proposes that the closed area should be open during all archery deer seasons.

The waterfowl mainly rely on the open water habitat during the migration as resting areas. Of the 7,300 acres, there are over 2,800 acres of land in the closed area and nearly 1,300 acres of open water habitat for waterfowl refuge. There is more than enough area for bowhunters (on the wooded and upland portions of the closed area), and migrating waterfowl (in open water) within the closed area. In general, state and federal public properties are too gated, too restrictive, and too closed; to the point that sportsmen and women often wonder why they are considered "public" properties. The fact is that the GRM closed area's intent and bowhunting are amicable uses of the property, due to the following:

1. Bowhunting for deer is a quiet non-intrusive sport. Bowhunting on this property would not substantially affect waterfowl in a negative way, certainly not any more than other currently lawful activities such as hiking.
2. There are many wooded upland areas within the GRM closed area that archery deer hunters could utilize without disturbing waterfowl on the open water refuge.
3. Also, the entire property is much more wooded than it previously was when the refuge was formed, creating a visual and sound buffer to the open water areas.
4. Gun deer hunting is currently allowed during the November firearms season. While DNR will describe the gun deer season as being too late to affect a majority of migrating waterfowl, certainly during some years, there is migration occurs during late November. Frankly, allowing gun deer hunting on this property, but not bowhunting is not an equitable treatment of the hunting public on a property that can certainly support a waterfowl refuge and also be open to bow hunting simultaneously.

BE IT RESOLVED, the Conservation Congress at its annual meeting held in Green Lake County on April 11, 2011 recommends that the Conservation Congress work with the Department to take action to correct this situation by introducing rule change allowing bowhunting in the currently closed area of the GRM.

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