

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND GUIDELINES FOR THE LEARN TO HUNT BEAR PROGRAM (LTHB):

These guidelines have been developed to achieve the goals of the program, ensure consistent implementation of the Learn to Hunt Bear program across the state, and provide for a safe and enjoyable LTHB experience for all involved.

CLASS A LEARN TO HUNT BEAR PROGRAM

The Number of Tags Allocated to the LTHB Program

The number of tags and events is determined based on workload, interest and ability of DNR Conservation Wardens and Wildlife Biologists to conduct the hunts, but will not exceed 70. The tags will be allocated by a centralized application process and subsequent random drawing.

Up to four (4) of the tags will be allocated through the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, the Wisconsin Bowhunters Association, National Wild Turkey Federation, and the Conservation Congress. The participants for these tags will be selected by the respective organization by a DNR approved selection process. Once selected, the participant will then be coupled with a mentor and sponsoring warden/wildlife manager. Two (2) tags will be allocated to aid in DNR sponsored disabled and terminally ill hunt.

Selection of Participants

- Interested and qualified candidates must submit an application to the Bureau of Law Enforcement post marked by May 21. Applications will be available on the DNR LTH webpage or at DNR Service Centers starting April 1. Novice hunters age 10 and older are encouraged to apply. Prior to June 10 the random drawing of qualified applicants will be completed.
- Only “novice hunters” are eligible to be selected as a participant in the Learn to Hunt Bear Program. A “novice hunter” for the purpose of the Learn to Hunt Bear Program is:
 - A person age 10 and older who has not purchased either a Class A or Class B bear license in the past; *and*
 - Someone who has not participated in a Learn to Hunt Bear in the past
- Participants and mentors will be matched as best we can on preferred hunting methods (i.e. bait or hounds). In an effort to reduce travel costs and to the extent possible, participants will also be paired by expressed geographic preference to mentors and sponsoring wardens/wildlife managers.

Mentor selection and expectations

- Mentors who are selected for all LTH programs must understand the importance of leading by example by conducting hunts in a safe, legal, ethical and responsible manner projecting a positive image of hunters and the sport of hunting.

- The size of the group of mentors should be limited to number that is needed to coordinate and manage the event. Demonstrating that hunting is an inclusive sport, LTHB groups are encouraged to have a combination of male and female mentors. If there are multiple mentors involved in an event, one mentor must be designated as the lead mentor. There is no limit to the number of mentors that can assist in a LTHB, however only six (6) mentors may be allowed at the point of kill.
- For participants 17 and younger, up to two legal guardians and any siblings of the participant may also go along on a hunt.
- To allow mentors, participants and immediate family members to understand the LTHB program and become comfortable with the each other, lead mentors must attend the LTHB training day and all mentors are encouraged to attend this training day.
- Mentor applications are available on the DNR LTH website and are accepted throughout the year. A background check is conducted prior to a mentor being approved in the LTHB program.
- If there are multiple mentors participating in an event, all mentors must complete and submit a mentor background form.

Learn to Hunt Event Requirements

- A Conservation Warden or Wildlife Biologist will be the Department liaison for all Learn To Hunt Bear events, acting as the primary contact and must be available during all LTHB events.
- A Wildlife Staff or a person designated and authorized by the Wildlife program, will participate in the training date, presenting on bear life history and management practices. Conservation Wardens will cover bear hunting ethics, firearm safety, rules and regulations.
- Only firearms should be used for Learn to Hunt Bear events. The training day will have a live fire component to ensure that participants are familiar and proficient with the firearm they'll be using.
- Either the sponsoring Conservation Warden or Wildlife Staff, or a designated mentor should be in possession of a SAFETY firearm to help ensure the safety of the participants.

The use of a second gun/shooter to assist in harvest is not allowed. We will allow (as with other hunting activities) a safety gun. There is no violation of the law to have a safety firearm. The only situation that the safety gun may be used is in a life threatening situation. If the bear turns and charges the group of people at the point of kill is when the safety gun will be allowed.

During the event the only shooting that will take place is by the participant. If the bear is wounded and runs off into the woods no one else should shoot the bear. If the participant is unable to pursue the bear immediately then a second shot will not happen at that time

- Only tags distributed by the Department for use in the Learn to Hunt Bear Program are authorized for use. Tags transferred to youth through the license transfer system may not to be used for the Learn to Hunt Bear Program.
- During a LTHB event a legible sign stating “LTH Bear Event” must be clearly posted in all vehicles.
- Holding LTHB programs in conjunction with a partner conservation organization is strongly encouraged. Using this approach increases the capacity of the program to hold more hunts, aids in providing the additional resources for a LTHB program, creates relationships between the participant, the DNR and the organization, and contributes to the future vitality of conservation organizations that are critical to future conservation efforts in the state.
- All LTHB program participants and mentors shall comply with the hunting regulations associated with bear hunting and the LTHB program.
- The hunt portion of the program should not take place prior to the third weekend in August.

Class B Learn to Hunt Bear Program

- The Class B LTHB program is the same as the Class A program, with the exception that a bear is not harvested.
- The Class B program allows for a novice hunter to participate with a LTHB using dogs or observing a bait station.
- The Class B LTHB program provides for a waiver of the Class B Bear License for novice participants.
- All aspects of these programs are planned, organized and held locally. There is no central selection process of participants or mentors for Class B LTHB programs.
- The following elements apply to a Class B LTHB Program:
 - Mentors must have a background suitable for being a mentor.
 - There must be a training day associated with the event that follows the Class A training day lesson plan, with the exception that a firearms session is not mandatory.
 - Class B participants are eligible to apply for future Class A LTHB events.

Disclaimer: This document is intended solely as guidance and does not contain any mandatory requirements except where requirements found in statute or administrative rule are referenced. This guidance does not establish or affect legal rights or obligations and is not finally determinative of any of the issues addressed. This guidance does not create any rights enforceable by any party in litigation with the State of Wisconsin or the Department of Natural Resources. Any regulatory decisions made by the Department of Natural Resources in any matter addressed by this guidance will be made by applying the governing statutes and administrative rules to the relevant facts.

