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Wisconsin Conservation Congress Resolution, April 10, 2006

The problem: Wisconsin legislators ignored the recommendations of a stakeholder group and the state Natural Resources Board earlier this year, causing hunters to lose an opportunity for a two-year trial season structure that included the elimination of the October Zone T hunt while maintaining advanced earn-a-buck opportunities for units that needed extra herd control. This proposal had been forged by a year's worth of planning, and won the approval of deer hunting and conservation organizations, forestry interests, wildlife professionals, ecologists, the Wisconsin Farm Bureau and the Wisconsin Conservation Congress.

Wisconsin hunters killed fewer than 900,000 deer in the 1960s. The total climbed to 1.1 million in the 1970s, 2.66 million in the 1980s and an amazing 4 million deer in the 1990s. In the first six seasons of the new century, hunters have killed nearly 2.9 million deer. That's an average of more than 483,000 per year, or more than four times as many deer as were killed on average per season in the 1970s. The current decade featured a national record of more than 615,000 whitetails in the year 2000. That total included a state record of more than 212,000 antlered bucks that had nothing to do with two free antlerless tags that were awarded with each license.

In fact, 7 of the top 10 antlered buck harvests of all time have taken place in the past decade, despite frequent Zone T hunts and even earn-a-buck in some deer management units. The buck kill is a true barometer of the health of the herd, yet some hunters continue to complain to politicians that the Department of Natural Resources is mismanaging the state's whitetails.

Whereas, allowing legislators to determine deer hunting seasons while ignoring the advice of wildlife professionals and stakeholder groups sets a dangerous precedent for the future;

Whereas, recent actions by legislators have resulted in a shameful waste of countless man hours and tens of thousands of dollars of taxpayers' money;

Be it resolved, that the Conservation Congress, at its annual meeting held in Shawano County on April 10, 2006, recommends that hunting season frameworks should be set by wildlife professionals using their best science-based judgement, not by politicians lobbied by special interest groups or individuals.

YES 39 NO 6

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