

Minutes
Sporting Heritage Council
April 26, 2013

1. All Members were present (Rep. Milroy on conference phone)
2. Chair Gunderson reviewed ACT 168 and the six specific tasks given to the Sporting Heritage Council. He hopes we talk about not just new hunters and keeping old hunters, but the 25-45 year old hunter as well. He feels we need to focus on this group.

“We need to keep this going (hunter numbers) in the right direction because if we don’t we’re going to have a hard time managing our natural resources,” Gunderson said.

Additionally, Gunderson said, “the governor really wants us to look at simplifying all the rules (for hunting and trapping.)” This task is also assigned by Act 168.
3. Keith Warnke told us that there are 33 shooting ranges on public land in Wisconsin. However, there are only 4 south of Highway 10. He discussed the use of Pittman-Robertson federal funding and how it can be used for shooting ranges (matching P-R funds in exchange for limited public access.) He briefed the committee on hunter number trends, which have been declining. Demographic projections show a 25% decline in hunter numbers during the next 17 years. He said focusing on the family, moms and dads, is vital to get youth hunting more.
4. Ralph Fritsch asked about funding for shooting ranges. Keith told us that the Secretary will earmark \$325,000 in state funds to be used for improvements at private shooting ranges in the next two years by re-starting the Shooting Range Grants program that has been inactive since 1995. In fiscal year 2013 \$787,000 in Pittman-Robertson money was or will be spent on renovations at public and private ranges.
5. Rep. Milroy asked if shooting ranges help recruit and retain hunters. Keith says we do not know but DNR intends to track this. Tim Lawhern says studies show that when people are asked why they do not hunt they say, 1) Nobody asked me and 2) Fear of firearms. Participation in shooting sports by non-hunters does increase the size of the P-R account.
6. Bill Torhorst asked what percentage of Wisconsin citizens hunt. Keith said 16-17% of hunting age population has a hunting license, it changes year to year, but in surveys 20% identify themselves as hunters.

7. Joe Caputo talked about the political climate in Wisconsin and how it can affect hunting issues. Sen. Wirsch said there has been bipartisan support for hunters over the years.
8. Sen. Wirsch asked about how shooting ranges are staffed. Most ranges are staffed by clubs and volunteers. The McMiller Sports Center range, west of Waukesha, is the only staffed public range.
9. Rep. Steineke thanked everyone for agreeing to serve. He does not want the group to just manage the decline in hunters. He feels we have many opportunities now to make changes. He has a commitment from Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Evers to educate kids in the schools about hunting.
10. Andy Pantzlaff made the point that kids need to know that guns are not bad.
11. Sen Wirsch said we should use the Scouts to get access to kids.
12. Ralph Fritsch says we need to get women involved in hunting. "I'm a firm believer that when you get the ladies involved in hunting, the kids will follow."
13. Chair Gunderson talked about high school trap shooting teams and how rapidly that program is growing. He mentioned that Burlington High School won the national championship!
14. Andy Pantzlaff talked about the First Shot Program. He says if "mama hunts the kids will hunt too".
15. Sen Kedzie talked about how things have changes since he began hunting. It is expensive to hunt, and we need to address the cost of hunting. "We don't want hunters to be elitist. It has to be for the masses."
16. Steve Miller used maps to show us state lands and to explain population density and hunting access. Most public land is in the northern part of the state, most people live in the southern half of the state. There are roughly 6.5 million acres of public (national, state and county) lands. He talked about a number of ways to get access for recreation; buy land, buy easements to land, lease private land, work to get landowners to voluntarily open their land, have public access requirements as part of government programs. He also talked about access to water and the use of stream bank easements. Copies of his maps are available in supporting documents.
17. Ben Gruber says that we need to fix our signs and have better signage so that people know where they can fish. Gunderson concurs and talks about money in this budget to do this.

18. Steve Miller says Wisconsin has 2,000 boat access sites listed on DNR interactive web pages.
19. Ben Gruber says that the cost of access, charged at some sites, is excessive, especially in smaller municipalities. Chair Gunderson has heard this concern as well.
20. Chair Gunderson talked about using GIS maps in the future. We are working on having apps available in the future for hunters to have on their phones/devices.
21. Bill Torhorst says the reasons people stop fishing and hunting is there is no place to go, no one to go with and no game where they can go. We must use websites and marketing to attract and keep anglers.
22. Gunderson talked about improving ATV access to hard to reach public land. Rep. Milroy said there also needs to be places that are hard to reach for those who want to hike in and have a more solitary hunting experience. "You can't just have extremely easy access for everybody," Milroy said.
23. The group talked about incentives – i.e. vouchers for landowners as in some western states – for landowners to allow public access. "Without access to private property, our future is much more difficult," Lawhern said.
24. Gundy explained the section of ACT 168 that has the terms of the members and talked about the fact that the first three members terms will expire July 1, 2013. We will be going to the Natural Resources Board to have these three members re-appointed and their terms will end July 1, 2016. The terms of each member are available in supporting documents.

NEXT MEETING PLACE:

Paul Heinen will set the next meeting, likely the second week of July (None of the 4 legislators can commit to any days in June as they are all set aside for budget debate). This meeting will also be in the DNR building, the same room, GO 9, as we need to have computer and screen set-ups for the issues below. We will again serve lunch.

NEXT MEETING ISSUES:

Chair Gunderson would like to get the Council information at the next meeting about social media and what DNR is currently capable of doing to help recruit and retain hunters. We will have Trish Ossman, our Social Media expert; do a presentation on this at the next meeting.

He would also like a mapping demonstration so that we can see what is available currently on the DNR website for hunters, anglers and other recreational users of Wisconsin's resources. We will have Doug Haag, who designed our GIS system, do a presentation