

2020 Spring Hearing Background Information

Revised February 28, 2020

Notes:

- In 2020, the DNR wildlife management questions are advisory only. We are generally on an every-other year cycle with rule proposals in odd-numbered years and advisory questions in even years.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT ADVISORY QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS 1-7: Requiring the use of non-toxic ammunition on state owned or managed lands

- Please note that the definition of “state owned or managed lands” is found in the questionnaire.
- Nationally, lead poisoning of waterfowl and the Bald Eagle resulted in a 1991 federal ban on the use of lead shot in waterfowl and coot hunting. In 1997 alone, the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) estimated that the ban on lead shot saved 1.4 million ducks.
- Lead poisoning is still one of the leading mortality factors of Bald Eagles. Lead poisoning can occur from the ingestion of lead slugs or bullet fragments in carcasses of deceased and live prey animals & in gut piles leftover from field dressing deer.
- Ingesting lead is harmful to be people and wild animals.
- Nontoxic shot, defined as any shot type that does not cause sickness and death when ingested by birds, can help protect bird populations and improve the environment.
- Nontoxic shot and bullets are becoming increasingly available and affordable.
 - For example-one online retailer sells 339 different types of lead-free rifle ammunition in 81 different calibers.
 - a box of Federal .243 in copper is advertised online at \$1.35/ round. A box of Federal .243 lead ammunition at the same store is advertised at \$1.00/ round
 - Lead free .22 ammunition is available for as low as \$0.17 a round. Lead .22 ammunition ranges \$0.05-\$0.14 a round.
 - Cabela’s sells a box of 5 copper 20-gauge slugs for \$12.99, a similar box of lead slugs sells for \$8.49.
- There are now fourteen shot types approved by the USFWS as nontoxic.
- It is already required to use non-toxic shot for the hunting of doves on state owned or managed properties. This proposal would require it statewide.
- In 2019, California became the 1st state to prohibit all lead ammunition and shot
- Oregon prohibits hunters from using lead ammunition on a number of state wildlife areas.
- Illinois requires non-toxic shot for pheasant and upland game hunting on specific public lands.
- For more information on hunting with non-lead ammunition: <http://www.huntingwithnonlead.org/>

QUESTION 8: Restrict the placement of non-agricultural artificial water sources in CWD areas

Do you support restricting the placement of artificial water sources that are not for agricultural purposes which attract deer or elk in CWD-affected counties?

- Water is one of the most common vehicles for environmentally transmitted diseases.
- Organic matter in water troughs allows for increased prion accumulation and the potential for prolonged infectivity compared to clean water sources.

- These water structures can repeatedly attract deer at concentrated sites, allowing for increased contact between animals and the increased concentration of prions at these sites, both of which increase the potential for disease transmission.
- These artificial water sources would still be allowed in non-CWD areas and the prohibition would be lifted should no positives take place in 3 years as required by statute.

QUESTION 9: Establish a raffle or lottery system for a new all-inclusive and multi-species license that would award the winner(s) the ability to hunt each of the species included in the license during the same year (Requires legislation)

- This proposal is meant to mirror successful programs from other states that allow individuals to win approvals with long wait times or the odds can be difficult to obtain.
- For example, the Pure Michigan hunt offers licenses for elk, bear, spring and fall turkey, antlerless deer, and the first pick at a managed waterfowl hunt area.
- No decision has been made regarding which approvals would be included.
- Elk tags could only be awarded to Wisconsin residents until the number of elk licenses issued in a year is greater than 100.

NATURAL RESOURCES BOARD ADVISORY QUESTIONS

- Natural Resources Board members have the opportunity to place questions on the Spring Hearing agenda and like the DNR and Conservation Congress questions, the board's questions are advisory only and are not rule proposals. This process is not new and has been used for many years.
- The questions are based on the NRB member's interest in a topic area with the goal of the NRB is to seek public input (vote) on the questions.
- None of these questions/proposals could result in a change this year. No rule making processes have been started at this time.

QUESTION 10: Extend the current nine-day firearm season by adding ten days

- This proposal is not necessarily intended to be a way to increase deer harvest. The question is seeking opinions about a possible, "increase in excitement and participation in our premier hunt and may be important for the future."

QUESTION 11: Eliminate the antlerless-only holiday firearm deer season

QUESTION 12: Establish a no-hunting period before the first day of the firearm deer season with the exception of waterfowl hunting

QUESTION 13: Invalidate archery and crossbow buck tags during the firearm season

- The lesser weapon law would still apply for individuals hunting with a gun deer harvest authorization
- For example, those hunting during a gun deer season under the authority of a gun deer license may use a bow, muzzleloader, or crossbow under the lesser weapon law.

QUESTIONS 14: October season for hunting with crossbows

QUESTION 15: Simplify and streamline regulations by eliminating deer management zones and continuing to manage by county units and public or private land antlerless tags

QUESTION 16: Prohibit baiting and feeding of deer statewide (Requires legislation)

QUESTION 17: Close the crossbow season in November and reopen it when the traditional firearm deer season opens

QUESTION 18: Establish a spring bear hunting season

- The Department does not anticipate a spring bear season would reduce wait times for a bear permit.
- The annual quota could be split between the spring and fall bear seasons.
- This could potentially spread out hunting pressure among spring and fall bear seasons.
- The Bear Advisory Committee considered a spring bear hunting season while developing the Bear Management Plan but opted not to include that as a recommendation.
- It is currently illegal to harvest a cub, or an adult bear accompanied by a cub during the fall hunting season. An adult bear is defined as a bear 42 inches or greater in length, as measured in a straight line from the tip of nose to the base of the tail.

DEER & ELK COMMITTEE ADVISORY QUESTION

QUESTION 19-20: Return of Earn-A-Buck (Requires legislation)

- The Department's ability to implement an EAB season framework was removed by the legislature through Act 50 in 2011
- The first EAB season in Wisconsin was held in 1996 in nineteen deer management units (DMU) within agricultural range.
- EAB seasons were typically held in conjunction with an October antlerless gun hunt to give hunters an opportunity to harvest an antlerless deer prior to the November firearm deer season. Several conditions were required before EAB could be implemented, and all were related to deer abundance in relation to established population goals within individual DMUs.
- EAB has been the only tool that effectively helped reduce deer numbers in areas of overabundance where conventional antlerless permit issuance failed.
- During the deer seasons of 1995-2013, an average of 1.24 antlerless deer were harvested for every antlered deer in non-EAB units.
- During this same period in counties requiring EAB, that ratio increased to an average of 3.15 antlerless to each antlered deer harvested.

QUESTIONS 21-22: Grant CDACs the authority to make recommendations regarding baiting and feeding in their respective county (Requires legislation)

- Current statutes require the department to prohibit the baiting and feeding of deer in a county in which the county or a portion of the county is within a 10-mile radius of the known location of a captive or free-roaming domestic or wild animal that has been tested and confirmed to be positive for chronic wasting disease or bovine tuberculosis. This law has been in place since 2003

- 2017 Act 41 required the baiting and feeding ban to be lifted if no positive test for CWD has been confirmed in the county for 36 months.

QUESTION 23: Refined antlerless only tool for CDACs

- This question is reminiscent of the old “River Block” rules that provides a “2+7” season framework that allowed either sex hunting during the first two days of the season and buck only for the final 7 days of the season
- The intent of this rule is just the opposite, and would allow buck harvest for only a portion of the season and antlerless hunting throughout the entire season
- The desired outcome is increased antlerless harvest, where other season frameworks haven’t been able to reach the CDACs herd objective.
-
- If the opportunity to shoot a buck is a major driving force for hunters to participate in hunting seasons, rather than increasing antlerless harvest, this proposal may cause hunters to either not hunt, or abandon their unit with such rules and travel to a unit where buck harvest is allowed
- This proposal would complicate deer hunting regulations while having the opposite desired effect on antlerless harvest
-

QUESTION 24: Sixteen-day gun deer season opening the Saturday nearest the 15th of November
(Requires legislation)

- This proposal’s intent is to open the gun season one week earlier every year
- This would eliminate the impacts of the earliest to latest opener scenario that occurred in 2019
- Opening the season on the earliest date followed by the latest opener in consecutive years results in an average decrease in harvest of about 15%, and is consistent each time this situation has occurred
- This proposal would allow for a gun opener between November 12th and 17th every year
- The proposal would likely provide for more consistent year to year harvest totals during the gun season and would likely provide hunters with more deer activity, especially rutting behavior in bucks
- The earlier opener could result in more seasons without snow cover, or with heavy standing corn
- 2011 WI Act 50 prohibited the department from establishing a fall open season for hunting deer with firearms that begins before the opening of the November 9-day deer gun season.

BEAR COMMITTEE ADVISORY QUESTIONS

QUESTION 25: Allow bear hunters on private land to use man-made containers for baiting

- Current Wisconsin regulations require bait to be totally enclosed in a hollow log, a hole in the ground or stump which is capped with logs, rocks, or other naturally occurring and unprocessed substances which prevent deer from accessing the material.
- Minnesota allows the use of “drum” containers that are 30 gallons or larger on private and public lands. Barrels must be secured to a tree so they cannot be moved from the bait site by a bear and must also have the licensee’s name, address, driver’s license number and their hunter ID number.
- Michigan also allows the use barrels on private and public lands with certain restrictions. The barrel must be made of steel and at least 33 gallons in size. Barrels on private lands must be inaccessible to deer and elk and can only have a maximum hole diameter of 1 inch.

QUESTION 26: Bear bait containment

- Current regulations allow baits to be capped with logs, rocks, or other naturally occurring and unprocessed substances which prevent deer from accessing the material.
- The most common procedure is to use a hollow log, with a heavy rock or other natural material, on top, to restrict the bait to only bears.
- This provision would allow the use of certain man-made materials to affix a bottom to a hollow log in order to keep non-target species from accessing the bait
- There may be some concern of litter/waste left on public lands that these processed materials may be permanently left on the landscape which could provide a negative experience to other public land users.

TURKEY & UPLAND GAME COMMITTEE ADVISORY QUESTION

QUESTION 27: Establish an earlier opening date for spring turkey season

- The current season structure was a result of a 2015 spring hearing question.
- Previously the spring turkey season began on the Wednesday nearest April 15th. The change was made to have the first period begin on the 3rd Wednesday in April to provide a more consistent opening date. Also, some believed the later opener would provide consistently better weather, and an opportunity to hunt over the Memorial Day weekend would always be available during the last hunting period.
- There would be no open turkey seasons over the Memorial Day weekend under this proposal.
- This proposal would also push the turkey learn-to-hunt events into March. The youth season would be the 1st weekend in April which would be more likely to experience unpredictable weather.
- This proposal would not return the season to the previous framework and would establish, on average, the earliest turkey season opener than the state had previously.
- Research has shown that an earlier spring turkey season has the potential to negatively impact turkey production by interfering with breeding behavior and harvesting dominant toms before they've had a chance to breed multiple hens
- Biologists recommend timing the season to begin near or after peak nest initiation to avoid any negative impacts to breeding. In Wisconsin, peak nest initiation occurs sometime around April 20

FUR HARVEST COMMITTEE ADVISORY QUESTION

QUESTION 31: Experimental badger season

- Badgers are currently classified as a protected wild animal in NR 10.02
- A recent study on badger completed by researchers at the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee found evidence that badgers are present in every Wisconsin county. The researchers also found that genetic diversity within Wisconsin was similar to western populations that are known to support robust badger populations (e.g., North and South Dakota), so Wisconsin likely supports a genetically healthy population.

- Other neighboring states, including Minnesota (Oct. 22 - March 15; No limit); Michigan (Oct. 15 - Nov. 14 or Nov. 1 - Mar. 1; 1 badger per trapper/season); and Illinois (10 Nov – 15 Feb 2020; 1-2 per season depending on zone) have regulated trapping seasons for badger.
- If supported, the department would need to consider a framework that provides equal opportunity to all trappers, options for limiting harvest (i.e. short season or bag limit) and methods for gathering biological data from carcasses. The possibility of adding badger as a permitted furbearer species (similar to bobcat and fisher) would require a statute change as the department only has authority to limit permits for bobcat, fisher, and otter.
- Badgers are the state mammal and the mascot of the largest university in the state and hold a special significance to many Wisconsinites. There may be animosity against a proposed badger season.

QUESTION 32: Record keeping for wild animal sizes

- Implementing a records program will require the development of a standardized scoring system and additional training of DNR staff. A records program will likely increase administrative workload for state employees.
- It is common for states to offer records programs for fish, but not many maintain records (length or weight) for furbearers. The state of Missouri maintains a database of record weight furbearers - <https://huntfish.mdc.mo.gov/hunting-trapping/trophies-certificates/record-weight-furbearers>
- For other species (i.e. big game) record programs are maintained by non-governmental entities.
- For example, the Boone and Crocket Club maintains a Big Game Record Program.

QUESTION 33: Change the starting date for the use of cable restraints

- Expanding the use of cable restraints has been suggested in previous resolutions. The DNRs Furbearer Advisory Committee discussed this exact question at their meeting in May 2019. There was support from the committee to move forward with a rule proposal that would make it legal to use cable restraints from the beginning of the dryland opener (mid-October) to the end of the fox, coyote or bobcat season.
- Cable restraints have proven to be a very safe and ethical trapping method. Looking at past trap incident reports involving cable restraints, domestic dogs caught in LEGALLY set cable restraints have been released unharmed. The DNR furbearer program doesn't have information related to trap incidents involving cable restraints in October or November when other users (bird hunters, hound hunters) are sharing the landscape. There are no known data or incidents pointing to a concern with the use of cable restraints earlier in the trapping season.

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE ADVISORY QUESTION

QUESTION 34: Extend the late bobcat permit period to February 15

- From a biological stand point, this rule will not have a negative impact on the bobcat population as the department regulates bobcat harvest via a quota/permit system. If the harvest success rate increases, which it likely will with a longer season, then the number of permits available will decrease in future years. This is an important point to consider since the department is just now seeing a decrease in wait times for bobcat permits.

- Extending the season simplifies the regulations but will more than likely increase wait times. The extended wait time for a bobcat permit is probably the biggest trapper/hunter concern the DNR furbearer program hears about.
- Bobcat kittens are born from April through July. Gestation period is roughly 60 days, 2 months.

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ADVISORY QUESTIONS

QUESTION 52: Establish a non-resident wild rice harvester license (Requires legislation)

- Minnesota has had a non-resident 1-day wild rice harvesting license for \$30 since 2004.
- Minnesota non-resident license purchases comprise of approximately 6% of the total license purchases in recent years, and their non-resident licenses appear to be growing in popularity. Wisconsin residents have purchased more non-resident Minnesota harvesting licenses than any other state.
- State and tribal wild rice committees have been supportive of this concept. Their reasoning has been that it would encourage conservation stewardship of wild rice to non-resident shoreline owners and give family members of resident ricers opportunities to harvest with them. It would also create reciprocity with Minnesota.
- The price of an all-season non-tribal harvest license in Wisconsin is currently \$8.25 for residents ages 17-64.
- The total number of rice harvesting licenses sold annually in Minnesota ranges between 1,000 – 2,500, while total licenses sold in Wisconsin ranges between 500 - 1,000.
- The author of the original CC resolution suggested a 3-day period for the non-resident license, because it would give non-residents a full weekend to harvest, which might include an extended Labor Day weekend which is the unofficial start of the rice harvesting season. Also, most Wisconsin lakes are not as productive as the average Minnesota lake, which means more time might be needed to get an equivalent harvest.

QUESTION 53-54: Increase price of non-resident licenses & fees for bear and deer hunting (Requires legislation)

- Nonresident deer and bear licenses were last raised by 2003 Act 33.
- That act raised non-resident bear from \$199.25 to \$249.25 and nonresident deer from \$133.25 to \$158.25
- 2005 Act 25 then lowered these licenses to \$248.25 and \$157.25 respectfully, which are their present values.
- A \$0.75 issuance fee and a \$2 wildlife damage surcharge fee are then added to the base amount which makes the final values \$251 and \$160.
- In 2019, 6% of Class A bear licenses were issued to nonresidents and 8% of deer licenses were issued to nonresidents.