

2021 Spring Hearing Background Information

Revised April 12, 2021

Notes:

- In 2021, the DNR wildlife management questions are rules questions. We are generally on an every-other year cycle with rule proposals in odd-numbered years and advisory questions in even years.
- The NRB and WCC questions are advisory only for 2021.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT RULE CHANGES

QUESTION 1: Allow falconry to take place on the Richard Bong State Recreation Area after the 2 p.m. closure.

QUESTION 2: Increase the time that cable restraints are allowed during regulated tapping seasons.

- Currently, trappers cannot use cable restraints until December 1st. This proposal would allow the use of cable restraints beginning on the dryland trapping opener (Saturday nearest October 17th) for bobcat, fox and coyote
- This was also a 2020 WCC Spring Hearing advisory question and was supported.
- Under this rule change, the use of cable restraint during any nuisance wildlife control efforts on private land remains illegal during the closed season for fox, coyote and bobcat.
- There is an advisory question within the WCC portion of this questionnaire asking if there is support for expanding the use of cable restraints for other species. Specific background information is provided separately for that question.
- This rule change does not change the list of legal species (fox, coyote and bobcat) that can be trapped with cable restraints.

QUESTION 3: Return to a three-zone framework for mink and muskrats.

- There are no apparent biological concerns under either a single or multiple zone framework. The muskrat/mink zone structure is a social question.
- This rule proposal will extend the muskrat/mink season by about a week in the south zone; by 2 weeks in the central zone; and by 5 weeks in the north zone.
- The staggered zone end dates are related to variability in ice conditions across the state.
- The extended season dates are not expected to negatively impact muskrat or mink populations. Muskrats are a prolific rodent species that have multiple litters throughout the year. Muskrats will quickly repopulate areas where quality habitat exists.

Muskrat and Mink Season Dates in Other States:

- Minnesota's season ends on February 28th.
- Michigan's season ends March 1st.
- North Dakota's season ends May 10th
- South Dakota's season ends April 30th (or open year round)

QUESTION 4: Allow the department to regulate target shooting on department properties in Columbia County.

- Was a WCC citizen resolution in 2013. Action on this was delayed until after the public range was built.

QUESTION 5: Extend the date of the gray and fox squirrel seasons.

- Currently, the hunting season for gray and fox squirrels opens on the second Saturday of September and closes on January 31st. This regulation change would keep the original start date of the second Saturday in September but extend the season to be open through the last day of February.
- There are likely no biological concerns with extending the gray and fox squirrel seasons as both species are prolific breeders capable of producing multiple litters of young in a single year.
- Gray and fox squirrel seasons in other states (2020 season):
 - o Minnesota: Sept. 19- Feb. 28
 - o Michigan: Sept. 15- Mar. 31
 - o Illinois: Aug.1 – Feb. 15
- This regulation change would result in the same season ending dates for cottontail rabbits and gray and fox squirrels.

NATURAL RESOURCES BOARD ADVISORY QUESTION

- 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 1: Collaborative scientific CWD working group

DEER & ELK COMMITTEE ADVISORY QUESTION

QUESTION 12: Implementing CWD Best Management Practices

In July 2019 the Wisconsin DNR hosted a two-day workshop, known as the Midwest CWD Collaboration meeting, to discuss AFWA's Best Management Practices for Prevention, Surveillance and Management of Chronic Wasting Disease. Wildlife professionals from several Midwestern states, members of Wisconsin Tribal Nations, plus state and federal conservation groups met to discuss chronic wasting disease (CWD) management and research efforts across the region. The goal of this meeting was to determine best practices for working together across state borders to prevent the spread of CWD. Expanded testing research, disease management evaluation and enhanced regional collaboration were among the top-level priorities identified. A key product of this workshop is a report that is a direct evaluation on implementation of the AFWA BMPs. The CWD Alliance hosts this report on their website:

Midwest States CWD Management Action History Report (PDF Format). Organized by Individual State and Disease Status Across 3 primary Management Categories; Prevention, Surveillance, and Disease Management.

<http://cwg-info.org/resources-for-wildlife-management-agencies/>

QUESTION 13: Using high fences to alter natural wildlife movement

QUESTION 14: White Deer Season

- All forms of white deer had long been protected in Wisconsin.
- As the question background accurately describes, there is no biological reason to protect white deer. This is purely a social decision that is generated by the uniqueness of white deer.
- There was a short period of time when protection of white deer was lifted within a designated CWD Management Zone, based on the approach that the opportunity to harvest and sample as many deer as possible, was more important than the social interest in protecting white deer. The statewide protection for white deer was returned after a few years.
- Currently known populations of white deer are present in 20 counties, and in some cases appear to be growing in frequency. In both Wood and Winnebago County, white deer have become common enough that some deer hunters have expressed concern that the opportunity to harvest a deer is being reduced, as a growing proportion of the herd is not legal to shoot.
- The question specifically asks about support to harvest white deer that are not albino, The ability to differentiate between otherwise white and truly albino deer at typical hunting distances will be difficult and require extreme care to avoid being in violation of shooting an albino deer.

FUR HARVEST COMMITTEE ADVISORY QUESTION

QUESTION 15: Expand the use of cable restraints

- The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies fur research committee continues to test new trap designs for animal welfare concerns.
- Their research efforts include testing cables restraints for their effectiveness of humanely capturing other furbearer species that are not currently legal to trap in Wisconsin.
- This question is seeking to expand the use of cable restraints for other species as new trap research information becomes available.

QUESTION 16: Change opening time of muskrat trapping on opening day of muskrat season

- As the question states, this is a social issue that trappers in the state are currently working through.
- The question has been asked as an advisory question in the past, but has not moved forward, yet.

QUESTION 17: Allow the use of traps with a jaw spread of nine inches in water and under ice sets

- The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) Best Management Practices for trapping (BMP) research has not tested/evaluated foothold traps larger than 8” as water sets for beaver.
- A request asking that the TS-85 foothold trap be evaluated as a waterset for beaver has been shared with the AFWA.
- At the time this material was prepared, it was not known if AFWA added this trap to its list of traps that will be tested in 2021-22.
- Currently, there is no information available as to the humaneness of using traps larger than 8” as watersets for beaver.

QUESTION 18: Lengthen the beaver and otter season

- The current beaver management plan (2015-2025) identifies the desire to address the length of the regulated trapping season and/or bag limits be modified as needed to work toward population objectives for each beaver management zone.
- The plan states the WDNR continue to use of the WDNR Furbearer Advisory Committee to develop specific regulation change recommendations needed to achieve zone-specific population trend objectives.
- Below are the current management objectives for each management zone:
 - o Beaver Zone A: Maintain the Zone A beaver population at its current level (2014) or allow a slight increase.
 - o Beaver Zone B: Maintain the Zone B beaver population at its current level (2014) or allow a slight increase.
 - o Beaver Zone C: Maintain the Zone C beaver population at its current level (2014).
 - o Beaver Zone D: Maintain the Zone D beaver population at its current level (2014) or allow a slight decrease.

TURKEY & UPLAND GAME COMMITTEE ADVISORY QUESTION

QUESTION 23: Study to determine effects of dog training and trialing on nesting birds

- Currently, designated Class I dog training grounds are the only areas on state-owned lands where dogs do not need to be controlled on a leash (8 feet long or less) during the avoidance period of April 15- July 31. This rule is to protect grassland nesting birds from possible disturbance via dog training or trialing activities.
- Dog training is prohibited on free-roaming birds from May 1 to June 30 on all public and private lands within the northern restricted zone (see map below). Some exceptions apply to these restrictions when training dogs to pursue wild free-roaming bears, raccoons, and rabbits.
- Constituents, specifically dog trialing groups, have expressed interest in studying the impacts of training/trialing activities, likely in hopes of lifting this restriction to allow for trials during the avoidance period (April 15- July 31).

QUESTION 24: Allow training, trialing and hunting without dogs being on an 8-foot leash

- Dogs can be trained without a leash, using live birds and firearms on designated Class I areas on state-owned lands year-round. Dog training is also permitted on designated Class II grounds except for the avoidance period, April 15- July 31, to protect grassland nesting birds.
- Currently training, trialing and hunting with dogs without a leash is permitted from August 1- April 14 on designated dog training areas.
- Negative impacts to ground nesting and brood rearing birds by mammalian predators is well documented so an additional mammal in these landscapes may have a negative impact, however, additional study on this topic could be conducted.
- Concern has been expressed that increasing dominance on a wildlife management property by activities such as dog trials could jeopardize federal funding which is specific to wildlife habitat and hunting.

BEAR COMMITTEE ADVISORY QUESTIONS

QUESTION 25: Delete NR 10.07 (1)(i) from the administrative code and related references to it.

NR 10.07 (1) PROHIBITED METHODS. No person shall:

(i) *Dog use.* Hunt or pursue any free-roaming wild animal with the aid of dog or dogs May 1 to June 30 in that portion of the state north of the highways shown on the following map except for dog trials and training under permit as established by ch. NR 17.

- This closed period is primarily to make the prohibition of training dogs to track and trail bears enforceable when the season for training is closed.



Northern Restricted Zone