

DNR eDigest

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The Bureau of Education and Information's goal is to publish "The E-Digest" bi-weekly on paydays. The bureau will publish additional issues, as needed. Contact "E-Digest" editor Diane.Brinson@wisconsin.gov or at 608/266-5215 to submit stories, story ideas and photos that communicate internally the department's work, policies and issues that matter to DNR employees.

August 27, 2009

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New law allows those 10 and up to "test drive" a hunt

Prospective hunters can learn from mentors

On September 1, a new law will take effect in Wisconsin. Known as the "Hunting Mentorship Program," this new law will allow people interested in "test driving" the hunting experience, including those age 10 and older, to hunt under controlled conditions and under the close supervision of a mentor before passing a hunter education course.

The new law allows those 10 years of age and older, as well as adults born on or after January 1, 1973 who haven't taken hunter education, to participate in a mentored hunt. The law makes it possible for aspiring young hunters in hunting families or youth and adults who may have grown up in a non-hunting family to have a hunting experience.

People who decide they want to pursue hunting beyond the controlled conditions of the "Mentored Hunting Program" will be required to pass an approved hunter education course.



Secretary Matt Frank (third from left) joined supporters, including kids, as Governor Jim Doyle signed the new Hunting Mentorship Program law.

WDNR Photo

“By working together, many statewide conservation organizations, the department and legislators have developed the safest mentored hunting law in the country,” said DNR Secretary **Matt Frank**. “This law creates new opportunities, and makes it easier for both youth and adults interested in becoming a hunter to try hunting in a safe and controlled manner. There is a strong emphasis on safety, responsibility and close communication between the new hunter and the mentor.”

Key safety-related provisions intended to focus the mentor’s full attention on the new hunter include:

- A mentor can assist only one person hunting under this program at a time;
- The mentor must be within arm’s reach of the hunter at all times while hunting, and
- Only one firearm or one bow may be carried between the mentor and hunter.

New hunters and mentors must follow all existing rules and regulations regarding appropriate hunting licenses, permits and tags, season dates, bag limits and clothing requirements.

A mentor must be at least 18 years old, have a current year’s hunting license, and if born on or after January 1, 1973, have successfully completed a hunter education course or basic training with the U.S. Armed Forces. Additionally, if the aspiring hunter is under age 18, the mentor must be the hunter’s parent, guardian or have the permission of the hunter’s parent or guardian to take the youth hunting.

If the mentor chooses to hunt at the same time as the mentored hunter, the mentor must have the appropriate license for the species being hunted, **and** the single firearm or bow rule still applies.

“The hunting tradition is important to Wisconsin. It is deeply ingrained in the fabric of our state’s culture and economy,” said Sec. Frank. “This law gives seasoned hunters a chance to give something back--to do for someone today what someone did for them years ago--introduce them to the hunting experience, which then became a lifetime interest.”

Interested persons can obtain a mentored hunter’s license from any license sales agent, online and at [DNR Service Centers](#). Reduced rate licenses are available for those who are 10 and 11 years-of-age.

You can find more information on mentored hunting in Wisconsin at [“The New Mentored, Take Me Hunting”](#) website.



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Lake Wissota’s Erickson named Silver Medal Ranger of Year

ReserveAmerica has named **Scott Erickson**, Lake Wissota State Park ranger, a recipient of its “Silver Medal Ranger of the Year” award for 2009. Campers use [ReserveAmerica](#) to reserve campsites at Wisconsin State Parks.



Scott Erickson, Lake Wissota State Park ranger, is recognized by campers because of he provides service with a smile.
WDNR Photo

Campers can learn about voting for “America’s Ranger of the Year,” while planning their family camping trips online at [ReserveAmerica’s Camping Club](#) website. The annual award is bestowed upon the country's top rangers, who dedicate their careers to serving park visitors while preserving the country’s public lands for future generations.

Erickson was one of five national finalists to receive the second place “Silver Medal” recognition. “This year’s winners epitomize what the ‘America’s Ranger of the Year’ awards stand for, and ReserveAmerica is honored to provide them the recognition they deserve,” said Seth Rosenberg, general manager for ReserveAmerica.

Read about ranger Erickson’s work on ReserveAmerica’s [Silver Medal Ranger Finalists](#) webpage, which includes a testimonial written by a Lake Wissota camper whose family “looks forward to camping at Lake Wissota State Park because they know Ranger Scott is there...”



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Mirror Lake adaptive paddling event scheduled for August 29

By: Greg Matthews, South Central Region

Mirror Lake State Park will host an adaptive paddling event tailored for people with physical disabilities on Saturday, August 29, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Friends and family of participants also are welcome to attend and paddle. There’s no pre-registration required. The event is a "show-and-go" sponsored by the DNR and Creating Ability, which modified the kayaks.



Andy Janicki demonstrated the adaptive features of this kayak while paddling Devil's Lake in 2008.

WDNR Photo

The event itself is free and will launch on the Mirror Lake Park beach in Lake Delton. There will be three adaptive kayaks available, as well as rentals for able-bodied paddlers. All vehicles entering the park must display a state parks admission sticker, which is \$25 resident annual or \$7 resident daily.

“This is an excellent opportunity for people with disabilities to get out on the water in kayaks specially modified to meet each individual’s needs,” said **Andy Janicki**, DNR accessibility coordinator in the Bureau of Land and Facilities.

“Participants can feel safe knowing that kayaks are equipped with outriggers which provide incredible stability on the water, a raised back with side supports that increase balance for the user, and specialized hand braces on the paddle for individuals with limited grip. There also will be plenty of staff to assist anyone in and out of the kayaks.”

“For anyone with a physical disability looking for a unique outdoor experience, come enjoy a day out on the water at Mirror Lake,” said Janicki.

After the event, the park concession will continue to have one of the specially-adapted kayaks available for use.

Footnote: *Greg Matthews is the public affairs manager for the South Central Region.*



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Benefit presentations set for September to November

The Department of Employee Trust Funds (ETF) will offer free public presentations on Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS) benefits in September, October and November.

These WRS workshops are valuable opportunities for WRS members, spouses and others seeking general information on retirement issues and ETF-administered benefit programs. Those considering or planning retirement in the near future are encouraged to attend. Topics covered during the WRS presentations include:

- Requesting a retirement estimate
- Survivor benefits
- Calculating retirement benefits
- Health and life insurance benefits
- Annuity options
- Beneficiary designations
- Separation benefits
- Statement of benefits
- Taxes
- Additional contributions

All locations are handicap accessible. If you're unable to attend a presentation, you can watch the video presentation and others at [ETF's Internet site](#).

City, date, time and location

- **Green Bay** : Tuesday 9/15/09, 7-9 p.m., Southwest High School Auditorium 1331 Packerland Dr., Green Bay
- **Kenosha**: Tuesday 11/3/09, 7-9 p.m., Tremper High School Cafeteria, 8560 26th Ave., Kenosha
- **Madison**: Tuesday 10/6/09, 7-9 p.m., Madison Area Technical College Truax Campus, Mitby Theater, 3550 Anderson St., Madison
- **Monroe**: Tuesday 9/29/09, 7-9 p.m., Monroe High School, Performing Arts Center, 1600 26th St., Monroe
- **Rhineland**: Tuesday 9/22/09, 7-9 p.m., Nicolet Area Technical College, The Nicolet Theatre, College Dr.

& Hwy G, Rhinelander

- **River Falls:** Tuesday 11/10/09, 7-9 p.m., UW-River Falls, University Center 500 Wild Rose Ave., River Falls

- **Tomah:** Tuesday 10/20/09, 7-9 p.m., Tomah Senior High School Cafeteria, 901 Lincoln Ave., Tomah

- **West Bend:** Tuesday 10/27/09, 7-9 p.m., Washington County Courthouse, 432 E. Washington St., West Bend

Should weather become severe, turn to local radio stations for possible cancellations.



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Warden Spaight honored by retired officers' Torch Award

At the Natural Resources Board meeting in Hayward on August 12, conservation warden **Chris Spaight**, Grantsburg, received the North American Wildlife Enforcement Officers Association 2009 "Torch Award" for Region 5. The award symbolizes the passing of the torch from veteran officers to wardens with no more than five years experience who demonstrate a "genuine desire to protect the resource and develop professionally."



Warden Chris Spaight, 2009 recipient of the Torch Award for Region 5.

WDNR Photo

"Chris Spaight has been an outstanding example to his peers and a positive influence on public service to the citizens of Wisconsin," said warden supervisor **Rick Rosen** in nominating Spaight. "Chris continues to display an extraordinary level of self-accountability, professionalism and enthusiasm for his career."

Some of Spaight's specific accomplishments and qualities included in Rosen's nomination:

- A high level of motivation and dedication combined with an endless positive attitude.
- An ability to foster interpersonal relationships that build cooperation between a wide variety of organizations and agencies.
- A close working relationship with the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission officers on tribal issues.
- A keen interest in search and rescue, leading to the 2008 rescues of an autistic man and a hunter.
- A professional approach to documenting investigations and obtaining convictions for natural resource violations.

When presenting the Torch Award, Secretary **Matt Frank** noted that among the criteria used to qualify Spaight was that he "...must demonstrate exceptional ability and initiative in the performance of his or her duties, including public education."

The secretary pointed out that Spaight has the unusual circumstance, because of his assigned jurisdiction, of

needing to know Minnesota conservation laws. He went on to say that “Chris has a well-rounded law enforcement program with a wide variety of arrests on (violation of) fish and game, environmental, boating, ATV and snowmobiling laws. “

Also because of his location, Spaight is responsible for enforcing laws pertaining to “bear and bobcat hunting, tribal spearing and ceded territory issues, sharp-tail grouse and sturgeon enforcement.”

Rosen referred to Spaight as an asset to the state’s warden force and that the Torch Award deservedly goes to him in recognition of “Chris's excellence as a field conservation warden and his outstanding work ethic on behalf of the warden service, the department and the people of the state of Wisconsin.”



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DNR celebrated Smokey’s 65th birthday with free ice cream

Fire danger was low on the soggy Capitol Square on August 8, but enthusiasm was high, as Farmer’s Market shoppers stopped by to share some ice cream with Smokey Bear in celebration of his 65th birthday. The Madison event was just one of many held across the country as part of a national ["Get Your Smokey On"](#) campaign to raise awareness of Smokey’s mission to prevent wildfires.



Cooperative fire specialist Chris Klahn, Montello, posed with the birthday bear Smokey “between raindrops.”

WDNR Photo

The overall goal was to raise awareness among urban residents of Smokey Bear and his message, as well as rekindle memories among the older visitors who first learned of Smokey when they were young. Those living in our cities may be familiar with wildland fires elsewhere, e.g. California, but are unaware that such fires happen in Wisconsin, too.

While Division of Forestry staff scooped [UW-Madison Babcock Hall “Smokey Bear’s Necessities”](#) ice cream, Smokey himself posed for photos with kids and adults, alike. No introductions were needed for the best-known bruin in the world. Other Forestry volunteers (humans) talked about the wildfire fighting equipment parked on the Square.

“For 65 years, Smokey has symbolized wildfire prevention and education on the role of fire in nature,” said

Catherine Regan, DNR wildfire prevention specialist. “His face and his slogan, ‘only you can prevent wildfires,’ have accompanied generations of campers, hikers, hunters and anglers in pursuit of their favorite pastimes.”

Regan organized the event, including getting the commitment from Babcock Hall for the birthday bash ice cream specially flavored with things a bear would eat, like honey, cinnamon, (Wisconsin) cranberries and pecans. Over the years, Babcock Hall ice cream makers have concocted many special flavors in honor of people and events.



Jim Barnier, fire suppression specialist stationed in Wisconsin Dells, took a break from scooping to join his children Kennedy (eating ice cream) and Dakota under a much-needed umbrella on the Capitol Square.

WDNR Photo

On August 9, 1944, illustrator Albert Staehle drew the first Smokey image. Firefighters later rescued a bear cub, clinging to a tree after a wildfire had passed. Smokey, as he came to be known, was just a cub in 1950. After his rescue and treatment by an area vet for burns, he lived at the National Zoo in Washington, D.C. for the remainder of his life, a living symbol for wildfire safety and prevention.

Regan worked with a [toolkit](#), which the U.S. Forest Service compiled and distributed. Local agencies could use the many templates available in the kit. “We made our own birthday card and gave those away, along with ice cream scoopers with the line “Get the scoop on Smokey” printed on them. Anyone wanting a free scooper had to do their best Smokey impression and repeat the famous phrase, ‘only you can prevent wildfires,’ which was printed on the volunteers’ t-shirts,” said Regan.

For more information on Wisconsin’s wildfire fighting and prevention programs, visit the department’s [“Forest Fire Program”](#) website, where you also can learn about [“Firewise,”](#) a program designed to help homeowners reduce the risk of their homes going up in smoke due to a wildfire.



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Property auctions open to state employees, too

DNR employees, along with the general public, are eligible to bid online for surplus property that the Bureau of Facilities and Lands is disposing of, such as equipment, tools, buildings for razing and/or removing, salvage materials and personal property. The [“Real Estate Program DNR Surplus Property Auction”](#) is your doorway to purchasing or selling such items.

The DNR Bureau of Facilities and Lands is responsible for the disposal of surplus property associated with the purchase of land, e.g. homes, out buildings, equipment, etc.



This cabin located near Amberg is open for bids until September 4. The buyer will have to move the building to another location. WDNR Photo

“DNR staff efforts and initiatives to recycle, re-use and re-purpose the items that are deemed 'surplus' keep them out of our landfills and are the motivation behind these auctions,” said **Cheryl Housley**, real estate specialist in the central office. “Someone's junk maybe someone else's treasure.”

“Employees are eligible to bid on these items, as it is open to the general public, so no favoritism is possible. Also, by letting everyone know this is something we are trying, they too may benefit from selling surplus stuff this way,” said **Jean Romback-Bartels**, Northeast Region's land leader.

Real Estate staff looked at the auction site [“Wisconsin Surplus Online Auction,”](#) an Internet service managed by Lust Auction Services, LLC. Lust Auction handles the entire process. This auction house not only manages bids for State of Wisconsin property, but also serves Wisconsin cities, counties, municipalities and private estates.

So, if you've dreamed of purchasing a cabin at Pike Wild River or the Potawatomi State Park ski chalet, land not included, check out DNR's Real Estate surplus properties auction page, where you'll be directed to the websites handling the actual auctions.



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Although still on break, Legislature continues hearings

By: Paul Heinen, Office of the Secretary

Legislators will return to their capitol offices in less than a month. While on summer break, they continue to hold hearings. No bills can be passed, however, before September 15.

For a complete status report on Senate and Assembly bills introduced in fiscal years 2009-2011, go to ["2009 Bill Tracker."](#)

Hearing highlights

The Legislative Council Special Committee on Enhancing Recreational Trails for NonMotorized Use, chaired by Senator Jim Sullivan, has introduced three bills. All three bills have been referred to Senator Jim Holperin's Natural Resources Committee.

- **SB 264**, Allowing wardens to enforce trespass laws on all lands

- **SB 265**, Funding for all Wisconsin trails
 - **SB 266**, Creating a Nonmotorized Recreation and Transportation Trails Council
- The Assembly Fish and Wildlife Committee held a public hearing this week on two bills:
- **AB 355**, which Representative Ann Hraychuck introduced, would eliminate the current three day waiting period for an archery license.
 - Also introduced by Rep. Hraychuck and heard, **AB 371** would make changes to the bear hunting regulations.
- Footnote:** *Paul Heinen is a policy initiative advisor for the Secretary's Office.*



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Chaya Marsh anticipates waterfowl season

By: Greg Matthews, South Central Region

The department, in partnership with Ducks Unlimited, recently completed and dedicated a new 300-acre impoundment, Chaya Marsh, located on the northwest portion of Horicon Marsh State Wildlife Area in Dodge County.



A panoramic view of Chaya Marsh, now open to the public, thanks to partnership with Ducks Unlimited.
WDNR Photo

“We are formally announcing that Chaya Marsh is open to the public,” said DNR wildlife biologist **Brenda Kelly**, Horicon. In conjunction with its opening, Kelly will be hosting a presentation on Horicon Marsh and its management on Wednesday evening, September 9 at 7 p.m. at the new Horicon Marsh International Education Center, located on State Highway 28 between Horicon and Mayville.

The partnership began in 2003 and came together when a host of private individuals, businesses and foundations received funding from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA). NAWCA is a non-regulatory, incentive-based, voluntary wildlife conservation program designed to promote public-private partnerships to protect, restore and manage wetland habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife.

Department steps in to manage marsh's effectiveness

Much of Horicon Marsh has degraded over the years, resulting in large monocultures of cattail. Sediment and nutrient loading from the surrounding landscape and watershed, carp activity, and the inability to manage water levels on main pools have all contributed to this condition. The vast majority of the exterior open water marsh areas lack submergent vegetation and provide little food for migrating waterfowl and other wetland wildlife. The 32,000-acre Horicon Marsh includes an 11,000-acre state wildlife area with the remaining land designated a national wildlife refuge.

Chaya Marsh is an impoundment encompassed completely by a berm or dike. The berm is impermeable or

water tight, giving DNR the ability to adjust water levels independent of the outside marsh. The Chaya Marsh project included installing five new water control structures to manipulate water levels and create a better ratio of vegetation to open water. The new shallow water areas will allow for more beneficial submergent plants to come in and create more critical habitat for wetland wildlife.

During the construction project, the area remained closed to public access for safety reasons. Now with the area open to the public, DNR is urging those who enter the interior of the impoundment to use caution because of deep water (borrow ditch) resulting from the construction of the berm. The borrow ditch is 15-20 feet deep in places.

Hunting seasons will bring people back to the marsh

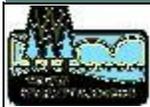
There are three access points for walk-ins, and they are posted with yellow signs and arrows. One is located in the northwest corner and the other two are in the south and southwest corners. The immediate western boundary of Chaya Marsh is bordered by Burnett impoundment, which is a waterfowl refuge open to the public only during the gun deer hunting season.

Kickoff to the fall hunting season is September 1, with early Canada goose hunting; September 19 and 20 are the youth waterfowl hunts; Horicon Zone goose season opens September 16; and the regular duck season opens October 3 in the south. Kelly advises hunters to refer to the "Migratory Game Bird" regulations for complete details. She also encourages hunters to scout early and check out conditions on the marsh.

Footnote: *Greg Matthews is the South Central Region's public affairs manager.*



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